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This was England

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*Ah ! too true ! Time's current strong
Leaves us fixt to nothing long.
Yet, if little stays with man,
Ah ! retain we all we can.
If the clear impression dies
Ah ! the dim remembrance prize !
Ere the parting hours go by
Quick, thy tablets, Memory !*



THE POOL, WIDCOMBE MANOR

THIS WAS ENGLAND

A COUNTRYMAN'S CALENDAR

BEING A PILGRIMAGE THROUGH THE BY-WAYS
OF YESTERDAY, THROUGH THE ENGLAND THAT
USED TO BE, WITH ITS FLOWERS AND FIELDS
AND TREES AND BIRDS, WITH ITS LEGENDS,
STORIES AND FABLES, ITS QUAIN'T CUSTOMS
AND FOLK-LORE

HORACE ANNESLEY VACHELL

HÆC OLIM MEMINISSE JUVABIT



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to
ALL WHO THINK SOMETIMES OF THE YESTERDAYS,

to
ALL WHO ARE LOTH TO FORGET WHAT IS PASSING
AWAY SO SWIFTLY,

to
THOSE TO WHOM FOLK-LORE, ANCIENT CUSTOMS,
AND THE STILL UNTRODDEN WAYS ARE DEAR,

to
THOSE WHO CAN STILL SMILE AT THE
MYTHS CONNECTED WITH OUR COM-
MONER FLOWERS AND THE LEGENDS
CONCERNING OUR SAINTS

I
DEDICATE THIS BOOK.

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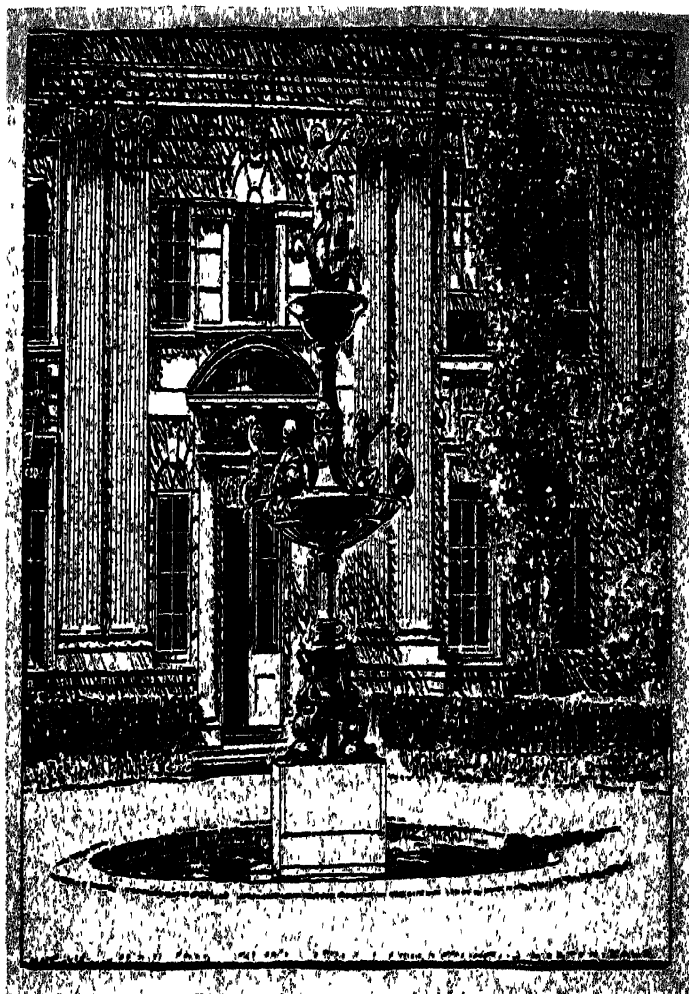
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•

Hail !

Hail!

§ I

THE genesis of this book may be briefly set down. Some years ago, on Hallow E'en, after dinner in an old manor-house, the talk turned upon local superstitions, customs, and folk-lore. My brother and myself were somewhat disconcerted, when we realized how little we knew (or remembered) of what, not half a century back, was knowledge which dripped, so to speak, from the lips of the gammers and gaffers. And then a friend said: "Why don't you collect material for a book of months dealing with our feasts and festivals, with legends of the countryside you know well, with the less familiar proverbs, with some of the myths about birds and flowers, and, incidentally, with the charm of this England that was?" I jumped at his suggestion. My friend, himself a collector of literary flotsam, assured me that I would find inexhaustible stores of information hidden in pamphlets, newspaper-clippings, and ancient tomes in our public libraries. He advised me to make haste slowly. He pointed out that this should be a labour of love, which it has been. Another talk with the director of our Bath Public Library followed. He gave me a list of the *Everyday* books written by Hone, Brand, Chambers, Southey and others. Apart from these, which are encyclopædic in length and scope, I

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found other books, more recently published, which dealt almost too faithfully with *one* of the subjects I have mentioned. Reading these later publications I realized why they had failed—with rare exceptions—to secure a wider circle of readers. There was so little variety of treatment of a theme dear to the author, so little humour, and too much dry-as-dust detail interesting only to the specialist. What a gulf there is, for instance, between two classics: White's *Natural History of Selborne* and Bewick's *History of British Birds*. White charms the many; Bewick instructs the few. Ornithologists love both.

What allured me was the quest of charm. Looking up the word in half a dozen dictionaries, I was surprised to find that it has significations other than "spell". We know, of course, that it may mean a trinket; we do not know, unless we are lexicographers, that it is used to express company, a "charm" of goldfinches, where the word is a synonym for "bevy" (a bevy of quail) or "covey", a "gleam" of curlew, or a "haggle" of old women. The clamouring of our warblers at dawn is described by Milton as "the *charm* of earliest birds", and is so used to-day in dialect in our remoter rural districts. By an odd coincidence I found the word humorously defined in a Crosswords Puzzle, as "a subtle influence much admired and yet by no means devoid of harm".

I like "subtle influence" because the charm of England is a percolating essence at once subtle and volatile. It is necessary to "tune in" to it; it exacts a care-free mental attitude; it exacts, too, a nice appreciation of the colour and rhythm of life, and it bespeaks a faculty for discriminating between prose and poetry. The ancient story of the milkman who

Hail !

gazed at Niagara with the outspoken conviction that a lot of water was running to waste illustrates what I mean. Years ago I was staring at our Cheddar Gorge. A man with me stared not at the gorge but at the boulders which Time (or the Titans) had rolled down it. "This land", said he, "is valuable." I replied rather tartly: "Valueless." He eyed me with pitying disdain. "You can't see what's under your nose. People are getting crazy about rock-gardens. They'll buy these rocks."

And, later on, they did——!

Looking back I should hesitate to affirm that I "got" more than he did out of the Cheddar Gorge, but this trivial incident illustrates two points of view. In the Cheddar Gorge my companion had a glimpse of a business opportunity, which "charmed" him.

The "by no means devoid of harm", apart from the obvious clue to the word, is arresting. The setter of the Crosswords Puzzle may have had in mind malefic spells, but I prefer to think of him as smiling inwardly, well aware that his definition would provoke the jingle: *Is there harm in honest charm?* Anyway, to a man about to write a book upon the charm of England this query was worth considering, because the quest of what is charming may become an obsession. If we look too diligently for what is small we may overlook what is big. It is impossible to think of charm as big. Because it is small it creeps into the heart and mind, where it may expand inordinately. In my own profession, it is easy to overvalue the charm of style, which may be lacking in a monumental work. Stylists exalt style, taking cover behind the well-worn tag that Style is the Man. But, so often, style is a counterfeit presentment of the writer who tricks himself out in

This was England

preciosities of speech which hide poverty of understanding.

§ II

THIS is the moment to explain what the charm of England is to me. I shall not stray far from ground endeared by familiarity. Many parts of England with which I have but a nodding acquaintance I must leave to others with the solacing reflection that it is not how much you see which matters, but how you see it. The tourist who dashes from Land's End to John o' Groats during the brief span of one summer will find little to interest him in my pages, because I detest excess speed. Satiety is misbegotten of surfeit, and the more you see the less you absorb ; everything becomes a blur. In a malicious spirit I have now and again questioned these travellers about details, but their details are retails, the recital of a paid guide's patter. Some of the transpontine birds of passage are snappers-up of hotel tea-spoons ! They " bag " these spoons as souvenirs, pleading in excuse—if the petty larceny is detected—what was submitted as valid to Mr. Nicodemus Easy by his serving-maid who had a " misfortune " : " It was a very little one, sir." These light-fingered ladies and gentlemen take back to Oshkosh, or Podunk, the loot—and nothing else. Who is churl enough to grudge them trophies of a goose-chase, except the hotel-keepers ?

The charm of England is quite apart from its claim to be regarded as a show-place. Our national monuments, our palaces and stately homes, our dockyards and huge factories may " expand the spirit ", as Byron said of the Alps, but often they " appal ". When I

Hail !

am in a palace I am never of it. A young lady told me that she loved Egypt because she was sure that in a previous incarnation she had been Cleopatra. I could sympathize with her, because I feel at home in certain villages of Dorset and Somerset ; and if I see a May-pole I like to think that I may have danced round it in the days of Good Queen Bess. An ancient bowling-green, or a quiet moss-encrusted terrace, might inspire some scholar to exclaim : " Quick ! Thy tablets, Memory ! " But I say to myself : " Surely I have been here before. . . ." At any rate I decide to come again, because the spell works so slowly. When I saw the water come down at Lodore, I wanted to stay at Lodore ; but I was hustled off to gobble luncheon elsewhere. During a brief hour Southey's verses memorized in childhood came back. Were they part of the spell ? Why did Lodore charm me more than Niagara ? None can answer such questions for another. I have glanced through the *indices* of four formidable volumes, the poet's commonplace book, to see what he says about Lodore. He says nothing. He wrote the jingle as a nursery rhyme to amuse his children, particularly his son Cuthbert, who wrote his father's Life.

How does the water come down at Lodore ?

Even as the laureate describes it. He may have dashed off the lilting verses in an hour or two, but he must have stood where I stood ; he must have felt that the charm of this tiny cataract is a personal, intimate thing. Niagara has all that a mighty cataract can have except charm. Nor is it possible to compare the inland seas of America with our Cumberland lakes ; and they again could hardly be described as charming till you know them well. All rivers exercise a spell

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upon those who live on their banks, but how often some tranquil backwater is more fascinating than the main stream.

One must play hide-and-seek with charm. In that spirit I wish to leave the well-trodden ways and to adventure down bypaths. It is difficult to find charm in what is new. One can admire craftsmanship in modern furniture and silver and bronze, but where is the *patina* of age? A new house may be beautiful, a triumph of modern architecture, but has it charm? Nature, that fairy godmother, bestows the most precious of her gifts in time. She alone can saturate brick and stone with a thousand sunsets. The charm of a new garden lies in anticipation of what it will be when the years have laid tender fingers on it.

Pastoral England woos me with increasing fascination. *This England that was*. This England that may cease to be if well-meaning busybodies are allowed too free a hand with it. The encroachments of the jerry-builder arouse homicidal instincts, *but what do we do about it?* It is a national question which soars high above party politics; and no party, however well-intentioned, would dare to make it a plank in their platform. We arrive distressfully at the world-old conviction that what is everybody's business is nobody's business. I pointed out long ago that each county should set about reserving one sanctuary in which it would take pride, as a memorial, and also (an appeal to the business instincts of County Councillors) an advertisement likely to allure foreign visitors. Between each county there would be lively competition. In answer to my brief suggestion many letters poured down upon me, all, without exception, acclaiming the potential scheme. But there the matter rests.

Hail !

§ III

RECAPTURE of the past dangles in front of my nose, like the bunch of hay tempting the donkey to proceed. But I am not disdainful of new contacts. The repercussion of new on old is a thrilling process to watch, involving readjustment of values. England would cease to be if it remained stagnant. But this readjustment calls for patience, forbearance, insight, and experience : qualities not bestowed upon the many who love destruction, even if it masquerades as construction indifferent to reconstruction.

Writing a book such as I wish this to be is like ordering a dinner for persons whom you don't know. If you hope to tickle their palates with fare out of the ordinary, you run the risk of not doing so, a disagreeable experience for any host ; and so, if an author is wise, he includes in the bill of fare some solid joint. My *pièce de résistance* will be my love of England, which waxes stronger as the time approaches when I must pass on. Because I have seen much of my own country, I regret that I have not seen more ; and it is humiliating to reflect that what I have seen might have been a greater source of profit, had I taken to it more intimate knowledge of the past, and a greater appreciation of—quality.

Quality is passing, and with it *the* "quality". How impossible to consider one without the other ! A pessimist observed recently that the gentlemen of England perished during the war, and that, to-day, all the women are ladies. If you speak of the fair as *women* they are affronted. Demos has no use for quality, no use for a leisured class, gentle in its ways and manners. Demos is seeing to it that the gentlewoman, as we

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knew her before the war, should pass away. Our laid-in-lavender ladies are flitting out of sight silently and unprotestingly. They realize that there is no place for them in a too bustling world. They have achieved immortality in Miss Austen's novels, or possibly (if it survives) in *Cranford*; but as flesh-and-blood personalities and influences they are ceasing to be.

Our sometime gentlewomen imposed quality upon the men.

*A nymph of quality admires our knight ;
He marries, bows at Court, and grows polite.*

Quality is used here as opposed to quantity. It stands for excellence, finish, polish, and refinement. We speak of the *quality* of a great craftsman's work; and craftsmanship is scourged out of the temple by standardization.

The gentlewomen, whom I have known and loved, are sharply defined against a soft grey background, the background dear to the artists in watercolour who made charming portraits of them. The Bright Young People eye these portraits disdainfully, exclaiming: "Chocolate-boxy!" They ask: "Did these old dears ever *do* anything?" We have to admit that the old dears were passive in their activities, tranquilly at peace with themselves and their neighbours, guarded of speech, sensitive to all that is beautiful in life, shrinking from what they held, rightly or wrongly, to be evil. This presentment of them provokes derisive smiles and the remark: "How dull they must have been——!"

They were not dull, even if judged by modern standards. They talked well; they wrote delightful letters; they practised the minor arts that please others,

Hail !

including the art of listening, they kept themselves and their houses in order ; they must have governed their thoughts as efficiently as they governed their actions.

Did they, whether consciously or not, cherish quality in things as in persons ? Had the discipline of their childhood a controlling influence upon their sense of quality ? They were trained to put from them what was unclean or ignoble. Purity sat enthroned in their clear, untroubled eyes. They gave a tithe of their income, and often much more, to the poor ; they abhorred restlessness, pretension, publicity, and vulgarity ; they loved their own homes and their own people who loved them ; they had an abiding affection and respect for the English language ; they served God and honoured the Great White Queen.

They had not the wider vision, although they looked up rather than down ; they refused to discuss certain subjects ; they resented criticism of anything or anybody dear to them ; they were loyal to their own conventions and traditions ; they curtseyed to Authority as automatically as we stand up to-day when the National Anthem is played ; they were exclusive in their friendships, and never familiar with mere acquaintances ; they were sticklers for forms and ceremonies.

When we think of these gentlewomen, we have to consider quality—*wherever it may be found*. They were the jealous guardians of what is passing because they are passing. What we owe to them has never been computed, although now and again some colossus pays tribute to his mother ; and now and again we read of great ladies who have played notable parts in the destinies of our Empire. But the gentlewomen I have in

This was England

mind were not great ladies who swayed statesmen. They left the weightier matters of statecraft to their men, making things at home easier for the dominant partner. They knew, none better, "what every woman knows", that a wife's sovereignty is in her home. Their passing imperils the home—and its sanctities. Demos may give us communal kitchens and equality of income. Where then will be the home?

I liken some of these gracious ladies to the roses and lilies of the garden. Can we do without them? Many, although they led leisurely lives, toiled in fields which the Lord had blessed. Nobody could accuse them of belonging to the idle rich. But they had the means and the time to study quality. Without being offensive, I might cite one instance. An English porcelain factory was famous for the quality of its paste and decoration. I went over it not long ago, and learned with dismay that there was no demand for quality; an immense business was done in quantity.

Happily, much that is cheap is not nasty, but conspicuously it lacks quality. No woman buys a gown (or a parlour *suite*) for its wearing qualities. Living in Bath I know some of our stone-masons. The elder men deplore the passing of the mason who lavished love upon his work. During a severe frost much of the new stonework disintegrated because it was bad stone and badly laid.

Quality is passing from our food. It is difficult to get simple food simply cooked. Quality has gone from our bread and our small-beer.

Quality is passing from our literature. An essayist of the first rank has a very limited market. The younger men and women, who write novels, may be clever, often brilliant, but much of their work is coarse

Hail !

and crude, particularly so when they mistake violence for strength. Music and painting, if it is to be popular with the million, appear to me to be labour-saving devices, too often with the "de" left out. I refuse to believe that "jazz", and portraits of ladies which have been mistaken for plans of drains, are the result of any painstaking apprenticeship to Art.

Quality is passing from our speech ; it is now indeed the vulgar tongue, a slangue.

Conceding that it is passing, will it come back ? Shall we grow satiated with quantity ?

I am optimist enough to hope that quality cannot be wiped out of a nation. It may lie latent, its voice may be stilled, like the voice of conscience, but it is, in its working sense, a touchstone of supreme endeavour, infallibly so. We are a nation of individuals, for the moment under the heel of Demos ; we are experimenting with mass production because it means so much to the masses—and rightly so. The many are increasingly prosperous at the expense of the few, and increasingly more intelligent. Appreciation of quality is the hall-mark of intelligence. Ultimately, not in our time perhaps, the many will demand quality, and then quality will come back.

§ IV

I HAVE written more than I intended about "quality", because quality is the heavenly twin of charm. Together they are irresistible. One thinks of the pair as two more Graces. The ancients have not much to say about charm as we understand and interpret it to-day. Physical beauty ranked first with the Greeks ; valour and citizenship were acclaimed by the

This was England

Romans. After the Dark Ages, when we come to the *Renaissance*, the Fathers of the Church looked upon Woman as a "dulce monstrum". Her "charm", in their eyes, was a Satanic spell. But when did "charming" come into common use? Now it is in common abuse, like "adorable". Mr. James Douglas has it on the index, together with about twenty other adjectives. However, he would be the first to admit that the word was not abused by our grandmothers. Thirty or forty years ago, *Mr. Punch* had a dig at it in a French Limerick :

*L'excellent archevêque de Parme
S'écria, en versant une larme,
" Que de Liebig Extrait
A pour moi de l'attrait,
Que de bœuf d'Australie a du charme ! "*

I submit that the French were the first to use charm as we use it now. Littré gives us "spell", and immediately afterwards "that which pleases", thereby including animate and inanimate Nature. But I should be interested to discover when and where charm was first acknowledged as something apart from beauty. One can conceive a haughty *belle* of the Middle Ages, sensible of the beguilements of a plain woman, accusing what appeared to be a negligible rival of practising witchcraft, and consigning her to the ducking-stool or the stake. It is certain that de Grammont, and other writers of the Stuart period, used the word as we do, but Shakespeare uses it in its signification of "spell".

And that is how I wish to use it throughout this book, as good spell, or gospel, with nothing malefic in its manifestation.

Hail !

§ v

OF some of the old English customs to be described in these pages, I ought to mention—at the risk of provoking good-natured incredulity or even ridicule—that they are not yet extinct. There are still gaffers and gammers who believe in witchcraft. Within the past hundred years a witch was burned alive in Ireland.

The gammers, who dearly love a good gossip, run mute when you mention local superstitions, or—which is more exasperating—make fun of them. They may tell you what “gran’ma” believed. The gaffers, over a tankard, are shirkers and skirters of any topic of conversation which might provoke ridicule from the attendant publican. To get reliable information one must “pump” discreetly the younger girls. They, let it be whispered, give each other away. Phyllis, of course, does not believe in any such rubbish, but Doris *does*. If you tax Doris, she affirms artlessly that Phyllis knows more than she cares to tell about what may happen on St. John’s Eve, which reminds me of the small boy who, apprehensive of an empty stocking, announced his intention of believing that Father Christmas came down the chimney—for one more year.

§ vi

AMERICANS tell us that they come here to find charm ; and none of our visitors are more appreciative of the Simon-pure article. Washington Irving set an example to future generations of his fellow-countrymen which they recognize and applaud. But we, in our get-rich-quick, imitative aptitudes, are

This was England

doing our best to destroy a great national asset. Costume, of course, has gone by the board, as it is going in Brittany and elsewhere. Dialect will hardly survive another decade. Christmas carol singers are now paid (somewhat grudgingly) to go away. Our mummers, in the remote villages, are an authentic survival, carrying on an oral tradition.

One comes to the conclusion that the charm of England must be sought for in places rather than persons. The *genius loci* remains. He (or she) would be immortal, if mortals respected immortality—which they don't.

It is generally accepted that no hypnotist can prevail against the dictates of conscience. If he instructed his subject to commit matricide, nothing would happen. But I have seen a hypnotist persuade an undergraduate—in the presence of other undergraduates—that he was enjoying ice-cream, when he was lapping up a large pot of cold cream!

To lap up the charm of England, self-hypnotism must be practised. Children see fairies and gnomes in woodland glades because the tiny creatures are dancing about inside their pates. It is platitudinous to say that you must take to a beauty spot a sense of beauty, but the ordinary tripper has no sense of beauty. He has trained his mind, even as he has trained his stomach, to absorb quantity. He gazes with lacklustre eyes at the source of the Thames, and murmurs to his best girl: "Lor! How paltry!" Some of the most enchanting bridges in England span our smaller streams. I was so impressed by one of these that I asked a man, who looked intelligent, if he could give me information about it. He eyed me as if I were an imbecile, spat into the stream, and said witheringly:

Hail !

"I've seen the Suspension Bridge at Clifton." However, I pulled myself together and asked : "Have you seen the Forth Bridge?" He hadn't. I entreated him to see it at the first opportunity, and we parted good friends.

This self-hypnotism, or auto-suggestion, soon becomes a habit. You start the game of hide-and-seek with charm knowing that it awaits you round the corner. It is elusive, but it is there.

It cries—"Cuckoo."

I hope that no reader, skimming through these pages, will accuse me of inordinate devotion to the past. The present rooted in the past allures me, not the England that was, but the England still implicit in what was. An empty cottage, however picturesque to an artist's eye, distresses me. I prefer an ugly house with people in it, optimistically assured that I shall find something attractive in them. Men have said to me : "You admire tumble-downs." I don't. Were I a many-acred squire I should be the first to demolish them. The houses I love are fit to live in. A famous architect told me that our stone-built cottages can be made habitable (and remain a joy to behold) at much less expense than it would take to pull them down and rebuild bungalows.

I loathe what affects disastrously health, joyousness and character. A squalid Irish cabin in the so-called Free State fills me with horror, as a slum does in a fine city. Nature is finer than any city, and a cottage with a leaky roof, with dry-rot in its timbers, with a mud floor, is a pimple on the face of Nature, and an increasingly evil influence on those who dwell in it. The object of this book—if it has an object other than to beguile my leisure—is to bring back what is fading out

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of sight and memory, authentic charm, not sentimentality (so different from true sentiment, which is feeling and affection) slobbering over what is not worth preserving merely because it is old.

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January

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January

§ I

MY old friend, George Russell, he of many "Collections and Recollections", had no love in his large comfortable heart for the month of Janus, the god who presides over the beginning of everything, and also the god who opens and shuts the door, a double-faced gentleman occasionally portrayed as *quadrifons*, because he keeps his Argus eyes on all four seasons.

*If Janiveer calends be summerly gay
'Twill be winterly weather till calends of May.*

For my part I prefer a seasonable January, although I detest bitter cold because of the misery it inflicts on the poor—and on Masters of Hounds. After middle age is passed—and with it an active share in winter sports and pastimes—a book-lined room and an arm-chair by a wood fire exercise their spell irresistibly. The Clerk of the Weather seems to whisper confidentially: "Lie low and snug, pay no attention to my rampaging."

In 1752, an Act of Parliament was passed, ordaining that the 3rd of September of that year should be reckoned as the 14th. If that Act had not been passed, we should to-day be celebrating the New Year twelve days earlier. Dr. Chambers in his *Book of Days*

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observes: "The old style is still retained in the Treasury accounts." Did parsimonious papas abstain from giving birthday presents to children who, by Act of Parliament, skipped a birthday falling upon the days wiped out of the calendar?

Properly considered the First of January is *the* day of the year, *le jour de l'an*. The custom of making presents on this day has, in this country, become almost obsolete. Pin-money, defined by the *Century Dictionary*, as "a yearly or occasional allowance given by husbands to wives", was originally money given to buy pins—more costly then than now—even as glove-money was given to buy gloves. Pins, most acceptable as gifts to the ladies, were made of bone, ivory, boxwood, silver and gold. Tenants on New Year's Day presented a capon to their landlords; Good Queen Bess accepted presents from any hands, however lowly; peers of the realm expected (and got) gold coins.

When I lived in the New Forest, where I spent five and twenty happy years, we observed many time-honoured customs on New Year's Eve, worth recording because others may do as we did. If they do, I can promise good entertainment. My sister, our *châtelaine*, would appear in the hall carrying a paper parcel which held the ashes of the log of yester-year. These were solemnly placed between a pair of huge andirons upon a clean hearth. Then, amid loud and continued applause from our children, the great log, some four feet long and about eighteen inches in diameter, was hauled in. To make it burn the merrier, many holes were bored in it; and you can be assured of a glorious and instant blaze if these holes and the log receive a libation of oil. Upon the top of the log and around

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it pine cones were piled. If a branch from a cedar has been blown away during a December gale, let it be chopped up and flung upon the cones, where it will distil an incense which will fill a large house with perfumes more fragrant than those of Araby.

Over this crackling, sputtering log of British oak we told stories till the moment was ripe for the roasting of chestnuts. Perhaps the children loved the stories the more because they were chestnuts; and I recall that I was put to it to tell certain tales without fresh embellishment with strict attention to former details. If I left anything out, I was likely to be rebuked.

After about an hour of this, the children brought in twelve candlesticks. It was part of the fun that these candlesticks (and their candles) were of varying heights. The hall was long enough to hold the twelve in line with four feet of space between each. The children lighted the candles, and, as soon as they were burning steadily, our *Bona Dea* of a cook, and all the maids were summoned. There used to be nine in the pre-war days. I can see them lining up at the end of the hall by the heavily curtained front door. We led the way. Each person present, with the exception of my mother, was expected to jump over the candles without more ado. The first candle represented January, the last December. If a too tempestuous petticoat extinguished a candle, ill-luck might be anticipated in or during the month for which that candle was burning. All males were in honour bound to take but one step between the candlesticks. Nobody was permitted to stop and look before they leaped.

What honest fun it was! How the younger maids giggled and blushed as they picked up their skirts and essayed—perhaps for the first time—the bold adven-

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ture. They and the children believed firmly in the fortune of the months; and the novices knew how likely they were to come to grief over the higher obstacles. I recall one little maid who was rebuked by the cook for lifting her skirts too indiscreetly high, but she refused to lower them, exclaiming: "I don't care, not if it were never so; I do want a lucky year." Our cook, a ministering angel to us for a decade, made a sort of royal procession down the course, a faultless performance. My son, after winning a hurdle-race at Harrow, was handicapped one year by wearing two white petticoats and a skirt to his ankles. To the joy of the maids he extinguished seven candles.

Novices were allowed a trial trip.

After our Grand National, the mummers came in, taking themselves and the business in hand with portentous solemnity. Some of their costumes, I make no doubt, were heirlooms.

*Here comes I, Saint George,
That worthy champion bold,
And with my sword and spear
I won three crowns of gold.
I fought the dragon bold,
And brought him to the slaughter,
By that I gained fair Sabra,
The King of Egypt's daughter.*

Who was the fair Sabra? Surely a dear and a sweet, worthy to be the wife of the patron saint of England. Consulting a huge biographical dictionary, I was much shocked to find no mention of Saint George who is indicated by Gibbon as "infamous"; and in the *Encyclopædia Britannica* the fair Sabra is grievously absent. Why didn't the wizard of the North write a romance about her?

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Our mummers were villagers known to us. Invariably, a small boy, playing the comic part of Little Johnny Jack, was acclaimed by the children as the "star" of the show.

§ II

WASSAIL! *Wass hael*: good Saxon for "Your health."

Hone tells us that in his day (a hundred years ago) the wassail-bowl was carried from door to door on New Year's Day with much singing and merriment.

*A massy bowl, to deck the jovial day,
Flash'd from its ample round a sunlike ray.*

Our wassail bowl, you may be sure, was not forgotten, but *pace* the children it was a very harmless decoction of weak mulled claret and water, spiced and oversweetened to tickle youthful palates. We passed it from hand to hand, and the youngest boy present held a naked brand (his father's sword) over each head as lip touched cup.

A true wassail-bowl must hold ale. This year, my brother and I, finding ourselves alone in our old manor-house, drank in the new year with what is still called George's Motley. I append the recipe for this; and I am copying it, *verbatim*, from a much-worn sheet of paper which I take to be at least one hundred years old. There is a footnote, which informs the curious in such matters that this wassail was "swigged" in 1800 A.D., or "round about", by the First Gentleman of Europe. We know that he was a seasoned vessel.

This was England

Put into a cauldron a quart of old ale
And a Bag of Spices. Containing
A piece of Orange Peel. Ditto Lemon.
6 Cloves
6 Pepper Corns
Whole ginger the Size of a Hazel Nut
A slip of cinnamon
A Piece of Nutmeg
A Full Desert Spoon of Honey
Bring to Boiling Point.
Put the yolks of three Eggs in a Bowl.
When the mixture is Just About to Boil
Pour it over the Eggs. Stirring with A Wooden
Spoon all the time. When mixture is slightly
thick. Add a Half Pint of Spirits.
The half Pint Consisting of Rum Whisky Gin
and Brandy. Ladle out to the Guests Nice and
Hot. If not sweet enough Add more Honey.

I confess that my brother and I were more than doubtful about this concoction, but we decided, like General Seely, to "live dangerously". Even as the bells of Bath chimed the knell of the old year, we sipped, cautiously at first and sipped again—and again. We looked at each other; we smiled. We went on sipping. I affirm that this mixture was rare tippie; and next morning, after three glasses of George's Motley, I woke none the worse. We shall drink it again next New Year's Eve, but my brother observed: "I think once a year is enough."

*Come, butler, come bring us a bowl of the best :
I hope your soul in Heaven may rest :
But if you do bring us a bowl of the small,
Then down fall butler, bowl, and all.*

In Bath, where the spirit of the Eighteenth Century still lingers, no mummers have come to our door.

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However, we must have entertained half a dozen batches of carol singers, good, bad, and indifferent. In the New Forest the parson of our parish saw to it that the choir boys were trained to sing carols acceptably. To-day abuse of an old custom will end in disuse.

Twelfth Night festivities are almost obsolete, simply because the ancient spirit is moribund. Hone has much to say about the Feast of the Epiphany ; and I think a reasonably cheap reprint of his fascinating *Everyday* books would be eagerly bought and read. He describes the *Feast of the Star*, or *Office of the Three Kings*, a symbolical service held in Roman Catholic churches on the 6th of January. Three priests impersonated the Magi, the Three Kings of Cologne. From the roof of the nave an iron circle, having seven tapers, was let down. A curtain drawn aside revealed the Child of Bethlehem. Offerings of gold, frankincense and myrrh were then made.

Is this inspiring service still held in any church in the kingdom ?

§ III

UPON a fine day in January, a pilgrim in quest of charm can follow his nose—let it be slightly tip-tilted—wherever Fancy leads him. The nymph as dryad might precede him into our woods, or, as Oread, on to our hills. Trees are at their loveliest when you can see the delicate tracery of branches and twigs against a frosty sky ; hills display opaline, amethystine tints in winter-time. Upon such a day visibility is good. Of all Turner's pictures his *Frosty Morning* in our National Gallery appeals most to me.

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The New Forest is enchanting upon a frosty morning in January. Nature is hibernating. One feels that Arcadia is asleep—and dreaming. If there is a sprinkle of snow upon the ground, one can find in secluded glades the tracks and trails of animals snugly tiled in somewhere. To see them is no easy matter. On the high moor the tiny pools—locally known as “splashes”—have a thin coating of ice. Some of these hold leeches. Within the memory of man, the gammers would wade bare-legged into these pools at all seasons of the year and wait patiently till the leeches attached themselves. Then they would go ashore, pick off the leeches, drop them into a jar, and once more offer themselves as—bait. I refused to believe this story, told to me by an old Forester, till I was assured by another Forester that his father, a sometime doctor in Lyndhurst, had bought all his leeches from old women who had caught them in the manner just described. He indicated to me a pond which, so he said, was one of their happiest hunting-grounds. I gave it a wide berth whenever I rode by it afterwards.

The late Mr. Gerald Lascelles, for five and thirty years Deputy Surveyor of the New Forest, told me that the oaks which were planted towards the close of the seventeenth century—intended to supply the wooden walls of England, Nelson's battleships—were sown not planted. Half a bushel of acorns were allotted to each person in one day. In his book, Mr. Lascelles records the method of sowing: “Pits or beds of three spits of ground each were dug, a yard apart, and three acorns planted triangularly in each bed.” After the ground was planted with acorns, it was further sown with hawes, holly berries, sloes and hazelnuts. Drains were cut; and traps were set to

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catch mice ; and persons attended daily to re-set the traps and keep off crows and other vermin.

It is interesting to reflect how much the New Forest owes to the British Navy. The fir plantations were planted, as an Exchequer order has it, "to provide topmasts and bowsprits for our ships of war". During the Great War, these fir plantations which had thriven beyond anticipation upon poor heath land supplied innumerable tons of sleepers for temporary railways.

I came to know intimately the New Forest in winter-time, because I hunted in it for so many joyous seasons. I knew many of the gypsies, a race apart, particularly those who live in tents, scornful of the creature comforts of a caravan. Borrow, perhaps, would not have accepted our "gyppers" as Romanys. Mr. Lascelles has little to write about them. He would not allow them to remain long in one place. They speak Romany ; they practise quaint customs ; and I believe that marriages still take place among them according to the ancient ritual. The women plait their hair as of yore and wear heavy rings and gaudy necklaces. Not once have I seen a real beauty, although the little girls are often very attractive. They seem almost insensible to cold and wet and are very imperfect ablutioners. Once, riding to some distant meet, I passed a score of them looking so dirty that I turned to a groom who happened to be a Forester and asked him : "Do these gyppers ever wash ?" He replied with a grin : "Only when they gets into a bog."

Whether or not it is still customary to burn part of the property of the dead I do not know. I find this note : "The clothes of the late Diana Boswell, Queen of the Gypsies, value £50, were burnt in the Mint, Southwark, by her principal courtiers, according

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to ancient custom." They used to make marks upon our lodge gateposts. I dare not set down my gleanings, because I have been assured on the best authority that the gaily kerchiefed young woman who offers to tell a fortune to "my pretty gen'leman" is under a solemn pledge to tell nothing else concerning what is regarded as sacrosanct. They lie, indeed, so blythely and artlessly, with such a twinkle in their agate-coloured eyes, that you feel you are invited to disbelieve every word they say. An attractive novel was written many years ago dealing with the adventures of a pretty gentleman who sojourned for a year or so with the New Forest Romanys and fell in love with a dusky maiden. It might have been written by Benjamin Trouvato.

§ IV

PLOUGH MONDAY, the first Monday after Twelfth-day, put an end to the Yuletide reveling. All over broad England, maid-servants competed against each other as to who should be earliest afoot——! Now, I imagine, a more welcome competition would award the prize to her who lay longest abed. Does the Plough-light, lit before the Reformation in our churches, still glimmer in some remote village? There are many quaint proverbs about ploughs and ploughing.

*Plough deep, while sluggards sleep ;
And you shall have corn to sell and keep.*

It is puzzling why Plough Monday came after instead of long before Christmas. Probably ploughing was abandoned between Christmas Eve and Twelfth-night.

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*Who in Janiveer sows oats ;
Gets gold and groats.
Who sows in May ;
Gets little that way.*

In Wiltshire there is an old superstition that if a man plough or dig up any path in the churchyard his spirit, after his death, will find no rest till the path is relaid.

On the 17th, we come to Saint Anthony's Day. Other saints, whose names are unfamiliar to me, have been given a judicious "miss", but really, if space did not forbid, it is among the lesser saints and the older hagiographies that we find the most curious legends and folk-lore. I have a monumental tome, *Les Vies des Saints*, by Albert Le Grand, which deals with the saints of Brittany. When I bought it thirty years ago in Vannes, I feared that I should not live long enough to read it, but I had read every line within six months.

Saint Anthony was assailed by the devil, because he elected to become a hermit, confining his nourishment to bread, salt, and water, and making his bed out of a bare plank. Nevertheless the saint lived to be one hundred and five years old. Luigi Cornaro wrote a book entitled "How to live to be a hundred, by one who has done it", or some caption to that effect. I have mislaid my copy, but, unless memory fails me, Cornaro, after passing middle age, adopted Saint Anthony's diet, because—as he ingenuously observes—he couldn't digest fish, flesh, fowl, or good red herring. I love the other Saint Anthony (him of Padra), because he loved all animals—to whom he preached. Lady Morgan says that he addressed the fish : "Dearly beloved fish", and that at the conclusion of his dis-

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course cod and salmon bowed to him with profound humility, and a grave and religious countenance.

§ v

I AM writing these lines just outside Bath, the Queen City of the West Country, and in my quest of what I hold to be the "charm" of England, I propose to wander from Bath, north, south, east and west, into the counties which adjoin Somerset.

Bathonians are saturated with the traditions of Bath. Bristol for wealth; Bath for health. It is a fact that the gentleman with the scythe deals mercifully with us. Swinburne expressed this delightfully :

*CITY lulled asleep by the chime of passing years,
Sweeter smiles thy rest than the radiance round thy peers.
Only love and lovely remembrance here have place.
Time on thee lies lighter than music on men's ears ;
Dawn and noon and sunset are one before thy face.*

There is great virtue in Sulis Water, no doubt, but greater virtue in the soft, clement, equable climate. At tea-parties you will meet frisky and still youthful ladies of ninety. The Psalmist's span is indefinitely expanded. One gentlewoman of my acquaintance gave a party to celebrate her eightieth birthday. In reply to many felicitations, she was heard to remark : " Yes, yes, I am wonderfully well for an old woman." Whereupon, one of her guests exclaimed in clarion tones : " Child, what are you saying ? Bless me ! I'm old enough to be your mother." Perfectly true. The speaker was a vigorous centenarian in full possession of all her faculties. . . .

So much has been admirably written about Bath

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that there is little left for me to say. I commend to the bird of passage Monsieur Barbeau's book *Life and Letters at Bath in the Eighteenth Century*, with a preface by Austin Dobson. Barbeau, like André Maurois, can resurrect the past and with Gallic wit establish continuity with the present. To achieve this exacts lively imagination. Whether this great gift can be cultivated is an open question; but of all the cities I know passably well Bath, for some reason or other, seems to kindle and quicken a sense of historical perspective. I have described it elsewhere as a city of gracious curves. The Woods, father and son, built the Circus and the famous Crescents, which are much as they were in their day. They had to accommodate their art to the curves of nature and the eternal hills. That is why Bath bears comparison with Rome and Edinburgh. But in Bath past and present have established an intimate partnership, although the past is the dominant partner. Possibly the mural tablets (nearly two hundred of them) on the walls of houses serve their purpose. Possibly, too, the Abbey and the Pump Room are more vocal because Bathonians, old and young, see to it that the memory of Bath "celebrities" is kept evergreen. It is impossible for any intelligent sightseer to walk along the broad "parades", or to drink a glass of Sulis Water in the Pump Room, without conjuring up the *beaux* and *belles* still flesh and blood to the Bathonians of to-day. As I write my eyes turn to a terrace where Pope, Warburton, Sheridan, Gainsborough, the lovely Linleys—and how many others whose names are familiar to us—walked and talked and whiled away the passing hour with agreeable (or disagreeable) gossip. In Bath it is still the "mode" to frequent an ancient coffee-house and

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to drink—before high noon—a cup of the best coffee in the west of England. In Bath—I am speaking now for myself—it is possible to glean anecdotes about celebrities which have not yet been printed.

Here is one.

A friend of mine saw quite recently a gold watch which was presented to Daniel Weller. In 1835 Daniel was an ostler at York House Mews in Bath ; and every weekday he drove a two horse coach to Bristol. At that time, *before, mark you, the publication of Pickwick*, a widow kept the tap at York House. Of her charms we know nothing. But Daniel proposed to the lady and married her. We may assume that Daniel was popular inasmuch as this watch was presented to him by his fellow-stablemen. We know also that the widow was in debt, and that Daniel became responsible for her debts which, in point of fact, were paid by him. Did Dickens hear of this sad *dénouement* to a romantic marriage, when he made his own Tony Weller say so emphatically to his son : “ Samivel, bevare of the vidders ! ”

Most Bathonians believe that Dickens, although he visited Bath in 1837, took the name, Pickwick, from the coach proprietor whose family lived and flourished here ; but the late Mr. Lionel Tollemache in his amusing *Old and Odd Memories* mentions a lawyer who affirmed that he saw in a solicitor’s office a deed containing the names of Pickwick, Winkle and Tupman ; and that this lawyer was convinced that Dickens, who for a time was employed in a solicitor’s office, borrowed the names from this very deed.

Tollemache tells another anecdote which he heard at the table of Sir Benjamin Brodie, not the famous surgeon but the Professor of Chemistry. A certain

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Professor Sylvester had been travelling on the box of a stage-coach. As the coach drew up at some roadside inn, two odd-looking old ladies were seen talking to each other. Presently one of them, *who was accosted by her friend as Mrs. Gamp*, walked away. As the coach went off, Professor Sylvester shouted to the other lady from the box-seat: "Good-bye, Mrs. Harris." Whereupon the coachman, rather startled, said: "I thought, sir, that you were a stranger in these parts. How on earth did you know that the lady's name is Harris?" And—so Professor Sylvester ascertained afterwards—the old lady actually was a Mrs. Harris—! And the other was Mrs. Gamp. Tollemache asks: "Is this an amazing coincidence? Or did Dickens really come across these two ladies?"

Bath owes an immense debt to Ralph Allen, the "humble Allen" of Pope and the Squire Allworthy of Fielding. He was Sheriff and, in 1742, Mayor of Bath. At his magnificent House, Prior Park, which I can see from the windows of the room where I am writing, he entertained Pope, Warburton, Fielding, Richardson, Garrick, and scores of lesser celebrities. Monsieur Barbeau tells us that he was the son of a small inn-keeper in Cornwall, and he entered the post office at Bath when he was eighteen. He appears to have been of service to General Wade, who secured his preferment to postmaster and gave him in marriage his natural daughter. He acquired contracts and concessions from the Government which must have brought him in at least £10,000 a year! Not content with this huge income, he set to work to develop the stone quarries of Combe Down and invented a machine by which vast blocks of stone could be shipped on the Avon barges, whence they travelled to all parts of

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England. Allen used his riches to support public enterprise and to ameliorate private distress. Monsieur Barbeau says that he sent Fielding £200 before he knew him. Pitt wrote of him : " Mankind has lost such a benevolent and tender friend as, I fear, not all the example of his virtues will have power to raise up to the world again." From his portrait by William Hoare you would take him to be the man he was, but it gives no hint of his oddity. The crest of Bathwick Hill appeared to him, as surveyed from his town house, to be bare ; so he erected the *façade* of a feudal pile which exists to-day under the name of Sham Castle.

Prior Park is now a Catholic Seminary ; and the beautiful Palladian Bridge at the head of the lake is sadly in need of renovation. It is almost impossible to see it at close quarters without wading through a marshy meadow. Unless something is done, and soon, to preserve it, it will become a melancholy ruin.

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February

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February

§ I

FEBRUARY Fill-dyke——! As a matter of statistical fact this month is not too noticeably rainy; and I have a notion that the Clerk of the Weather regards it as a naughty but endearing child, and one to be humoured. Miss Jekyll speaks somewhere of a whiff of summer stealing into February (not her words) and enchanting us with a promise of more abundant fragrance to come. According to this delightful writer there is *always* one day when Summer reminds Spring that her invisible activities are being watched by flaming June.

*In Yorkshire ancient people say
If February's second day
Be very fair and clear
It doth portend a scanty year
For hay and grass, but if it rains
They never then perplex their brains.*

This month ushers in Candlemas Day. Only the gaffers and gammers talk of "Come Candlemas". The children here, who are good gossips, have never heard of the feast of the consecrating of candles, with its emblematical reference to the prophecy that Christ should become "a light to lighten the Gentiles", a Christian festival rooted deep in pagan rites. Candles were lighted at the Lupercalia. Impossible to mention

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the Lupercalia without setting down the "bloomer" of my youth made by some would-be student of Roman history. "State briefly what you know about the Lupercalia?" The examinee made answer: "The Lupercalia was the name of the she-wolf who suckled Romeo and Juliet." As an *amende honorable* for resurrecting such a chestnut, I will cap this with another bloomer, nearly as good, which came under my own nose. A cousin of mine had a racehorse which he named Lara. Whereupon a brother officer observed: "Why do you call a colt by a filly's name?" My cousin, mildly amused, replied: "Haven't you heard of Lara, Byron's corsair?" A youthful guardsman pulled himself together. "Of course. I remember the exact line: I dreamt that I hung in Lara's halls." This, need it be added, is a triple bloomer.

Candlemas Day suggests to most of us, disconcertingly, how little we know of candles. They are mentioned in Jeremiah. Till within comparatively recent times they were home-made out of sheeps' tallow or bees-wax and exacted constant snuffing. Plaited wicks, introduced by Cambacérès, did away with the snuffers. Making a candle must have been a tedious process inasmuch as the wick was slowly coated with varying thicknesses of tallow or wax, and the thickness of the candle had to be nicely adjusted to the thickness of the wick. Candlesticks were necessary to catch the drips.

How long did it take to make a farthing dip?

Farthings are still current in Bath; but it is difficult to find out its purchasing power when, about a hundred years ago, a young man accepted a wage of ninepence a week, out of which he was expected to clothe but not feed himself. On Candlemas Day farm

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servants were hired for three months or more, the Canting, or chaffing, or chaffering Quarter.

*Does your goose lay ?
Does your maid stay ?*

Outside the lodge gates of Appleby Castle stands a pillar where these farm servants were engaged by all and sundry. The late Lord Hothfield told me that haggling, as between master and man, continued throughout the day, and the taverns did a roaring trade. Then as now it was a simple question of supply and demand complicated by natural greed and avarice.

Candlemas Day is also the Feast of the Purification, and was kept as a holiday by Scotch schoolchildren, who, strange as it may appear to our apostles of Prohibition, were expected to supply their dominie with enough coppers to buy the wherewithal for a bowl of punch of which the scholars had their share before the holiday began——! Babies sipped ale in this England that was, so we may hopefully presume that the children were none the worse after the punch.

Old Candlemas Day was celebrated on what is now the Feast of St. Valentine. Little authentic is known about this saint and martyr, who incurred the displeasure of Claudius Gothicus and was beheaded on the 14th of February A.D. 270. Elia speaks of him as the "Immortal Go-between and arch-flamen of Hymen". It was the custom with the ancient Roman youth to draw the names of girls in honour of their goddess, Februata-Juno, on the 15th of February, so here again we have a Christian festival founded upon a pagan rite. Hone informs us that a lad's valentine is the first lass he sees in the morning, who is not an inmate of the house ; the lass's valentine is the first

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youth she sees. He cites a girlish ceremony of the night before : " Last Friday was Valentine's Day, and the night before I got five bay leaves, and pinned four of them to the four corners of my pillow, and the fifth to the middle ; and then, if I dreamt of my sweetheart, Betty said we should be married before the year was out. But, to make it more sure, I boiled an egg hard and took out the yolk and filled it with salt ; and, when I went to bed, ate it shell and all without speaking or drinking after it. We also wrote our lovers' names upon bits of paper, and rolled them up in clay and put them into water ; and the first that rose up was to be our valentine. Would you think it, Mr. Blossom was my man ? I lay a-bed and shut my eyes all the morning till he came to our house ; for I would not have seen another man before him for all the world."

*Thee first I spied, and the first swain we see
In spite of fortune shall our true-love be.*

I knew personally a youthful couple, each blessed with the name of Valentine. They met, fell in love with each other, married, and were, I hope, happy ever after !

On this day the birds choose their mates, and many of them, always excepting brave chanticleer, are faithful to each other throughout the year, but, if one dies, what happens ? Are there, by any chance, bachelors and spinsters awaiting, dare we say, such deaths ? Mr. Gerald Lascelles kept peregrines and went a-hawking with them. He told me that a wild peregrine, if he lost his mate, would find another within a few days at most. Where was this mate found ? Peregrine falcons are rare birds. Mr. Lascelles could not answer

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my question. I conjectured that an enterprising bird might steal the mate of another. Mr. Lascelles thought this extremely improbable.

My brother and I had an amusing experience in our garden. For two years a pair of wild ducks nested in the reeds surrounding one of our ponds. Then the male flew away, and his mate was disconsolate. So we bought a domestic drake, who played Theseus to our forlorn Ariadne. The common drake is not a monogamist, but this drake has been a notable exception, and he and his wild little mate have been inseparable ever since we introduced them to each other.

Our garden is a bird sanctuary so far as we can make it so, but the nesting-boxes are too often untenanted. This is a rankling grievance because a cousin has hung similar boxes in his kitchen garden, which are all occupied by robins and tits. Mr. Massingham, on the other hand, a high authority, says that if the owner of the land cannot loosen his dogma of a formal garden in order to gratify his fancy for a sanctuary, he must perforce abandon the latter. He cannot have it both ways. But what could be more formal than a kitchen garden? We have supplied privacy, security, water, trees and shrubs. We have petticoated our trees to admit light and sunshine. We have indeed done our "damndest" like the historic cowboy, but it is probable that we have too many nesting facilities, an *embarras du choix*. Or, is it possible that the greedy birds in our cousin's kitchen garden have an eye on the currant and gooseberry bushes? I wouldn't dare to fling a pebble at them if they had.

Some years ago, on Valentine's Day, we noticed a pair of rooks starting to build. It is reasonably

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certain that these birds were expelled from a rookery less than a mile away, probably for petty larceny of building material. They nested with us for two seasons, and then—so my brother and I assumed—having served a sentence of banishment, they returned to their community. I find a note made about the same time concerning a pair of woodpeckers who nested, season after season, in a tree likely to be blown down in a gale. It was so blown down, but the wise birds had nested elsewhere.

February is the right month to roll a lawn, provided, of course, that the ground is not too wet. Most enthusiasts overroll their lawns, thereby killing the young grasses. It took me about twenty years to make this discovery. But in February and March the young grasses have not started to grow. A lawn regularly rolled during these months can be left unrolled during April, and that is the right month to apply some fertiliser. It is very important to buy (or make) the right fertilizer after determining whether the soil is acid or alkaline. A perfect lawn is a lovely thing, but it needs as much attention as a kindergarten.

Rare Ben Jonson has a word about St. Valentine, but where did he get his information?

Bishop Valentine

*Left us example to do deeds of charity ;
To feed the hungry, clothe the naked, visit
The weak and sick . . . not look for lovers
Or handsome images to please our senses.*

Southey says that two hundred and fifty valentines were delivered at Keswick from the post office in 1813. In London, he continues, they doubled the receipts of the twopenny post on that day. Long Nanny, the Keswick postmistress, had a boxful of valentines

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either directed to persons who had left Keswick, *or were refused to be taken in*. The italics are mine. In 1813, possibly, the vulgarization of valentines may have been common, and by 1875 the abuse of a pretty custom led to its disuse.

Pepys is entertaining about valentines. Upon Mrs. Martha Batten (his valentine for the year 1660) he laid out forty shillings upon a "payre of embroydered and six payre of plain white gloves". Sir William Batten sent Mrs. Pepys (his valentine) half a dozen pairs of gloves and a pair of silk stockings and garters. Next year the fickle diarist did "purposely shun" to be seen at Sir William Batten's because "I would not have his daughter to be my valentine, as she was last year, there being no great friendship between us now, as formerly". In 1666, Mrs. Pepys was her lord's valentine, which cost him five pounds—! The Duke of York gave to his valentine, the Duchess of Richmond, *la belle* Stewart, a jewel worth £800. Evelyn has nothing to say about valentines. The cantankerous Greville is silent.

§ II

IN February it is still in order for youthful couples to make pilgrimage to wishing wells such as Upwey near Weymouth and Conkwell in Somerset. Conk does not mean chatter, as well it might, but cony (a rabbit). Rumwell, Babwell, Luckwell, Patwell and Kitswell—to give a few instances—are abbreviations of springs blessed by the Saints: Rumbold, Barbara, Luke, Patrick, and Christopher, even as "*O mihi beate Martine*" has been transmuted into "Oh, my eye and Betty Martin", and "God encompasseth"

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into "Goat and Compasses". In Scotland, in 1628 (and possibly in the month of February), a number of persons were convicted of superstitiously and idolatrously making pilgrimage to holy wells to seek their health, and were fined twenty pounds Scots and ordered to repent them in sackcloth of a sense of misdirection. Near Cadbury in Somerset is a wishing well where women fill their thimbles with the water and drink it, and wish. Southey records that a girl of low degree drinking there one day wished that she were mistress of the well and the estate to which it belonged—and ere long the lord of the manor married her.

*And to this day as erst they wont,
The youths and maids repair
To certain wells on certain days
And hold a Revel there.
Of sugar-sweet and liquorice,
With water from the spring,
They mix a pleasant beverage,
And May-day carols sing.*

Lord Valentia (Byron's vain Valentia) speaks of a singing well in India. The sultan Suja, being a dog-in-the-manger fellow, put to death all his women when he had to leave home, immuring some in the walls of the well and throwing others into it. The natives believe that the spirits of these unfortunates beguile captivity with music and song. It is supposed (or was) that the throwing of pins into holy wells brought good luck. There are fountains in Brittany, and probably in Wales, into which, if a child's shift be thrown, and it sinks, death to the child will follow within the year. If the shift swims, it is put wet upon the child and becomes a charm against all diseases. Married women dip their girdles into such holy waters

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to secure an easy delivery. Nearly every holy well has its own graces and benedictions.

Unhappily, in this year of disgrace sanctity has departed from these springs. At the Holy Well, West Coker, Dom Ethelbert Horne asked a gammer if the water was "good" for anything, and she replied ingenuously: "Oh, yes—'tis good for making tea." St. Alphage (so Dom Horne records) lived for many years in a cell near the holy well which still bears his name. He became archbishop of Canterbury, and was martyred there by the Danes in 1012. This well, at Lansdown, close to Bath, is the only well in England dedicated to this saint. St. Julian's well, at Wellow, has a ghost story. When any calamity was about to befall any member of the Hungerford family, who owned the manor, "a fair white lady" would be seen near the well.

There is an enchanting little well in the gardens of St. Catharine's Court, an ancient house built by the monks of Bath, and to-day a dream in stone, well worth a pilgrimage. St. Catharine was a potent saint. How many of us know that the firework, Catharine's wheel, is symbolical of her martyrdom. As a virgin of eighteen she was attached to a wheel, but her prayers caused the wheel to break into pieces.

All these holy wells were used in pre-Reformation days as baptismal fonts; water is still drawn from some of them to fill the church fonts.

§ III

COLLOP MONDAY precedes Shrove Tuesday. Our diarists have little or nothing to say about this humble festival, the last day of flesh-eating before

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Lent, when our ancestors cut their fresh meat into collops or steaks for salting or hanging up till Lent was over ; and hence in many places " it is customary to have eggs and collops at dinner on this day ". Brand cites an account written by Taylor, the water poet : " Always before Lent there comes waddling a fat grosse groome, called Shrove Tuesday, one whose manners show he is better fed than taught, and indeed he is the only monster for feeding amongst all the dayes of the yeere, for he devours more flesh in fourteene hours that this old kingdome doth (or at least should doe) in sixe weekes after. Such boyling and broyling, such roasting and toasting, such stewing and brewing, such baking, frying, mincing, cutting, carving, devouring, and gorbellied gormandizing, that a man would thinke people did take in two months' provision at once. . . . In a word they are that day extreme cholerike, and too hot for any man to meddle with, being monarchs of the marrow-bones, marquesses of the mutton, lords high regent of the spit and kettle, barons of the grid-iron, and sole commanders of the frying pan. . . ." Truly a Rabelaisian description !

To-day our epicures demand *crêpes Susette* instead of the humble pancake.

Shrove Tuesday used to be a notable day for football all over the kingdom. It is not generally known that football is a much more ancient game than cricket and was played enthusiastically by women as well as by men. In Mid-Lothian, on Shrove Tuesday, there used to be an annual match between matrons and spinsters. The married women invariably won ! During the reign of James I football was considered to be so dangerous that the monarch forbade the heir-apparent to play it, and described the pastime as

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“ meeter for laming than making able the users thereof”. Shrove Tuesday football died out about 1830. Evidently the game was played in the thoroughfares, because shutters were put up and houses closed when the more notable contests took place. Now it looks as if football might oust cricket from its pride of place as the National Game.

Shrove Tuesday enshrines an anthology of folk-lore. If a hen did not lay eggs before that date she was attached to a man with bells who was chased by blindfolded men armed with boughs. Tusser Redivivus records that the village maids blinded the youths with their aprons and “ the cunning baggages will endear their sweethearts with a peeping-hole ”. When the unfortunate barren hen was thrashed to death it was boiled with bacon and eaten. A cruel custom now only honoured in its breach. Till within quite recent years it was practised in our more remote country districts.

Throwing at cocks was another Shrovetide pastime ; and in Scotland the schoolmasters claimed the dead cock as their lawful perquisite. Two lines from Sir Charles Sedley imply that the cocks suffered this barbarity by way of vicarious punishment for St. Peter's crime in denying his Master.

*May'st thou be punished for Saint Peter's crime
And on Shrove Tuesday perish in thy prime.*

At Pinner, near Harrow, the money collected was applied in aid of the poor-rates—— !

Cock-fighting, on this same day, was popular all over the kingdom.

Whilst I was at work on this chapter I happened to read a blackly pessimistic article by one of our

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most brilliant young men, a Jeremiad of inspissated gloom. Civilization, according to this Gamaliel, who surely not so long ago was sucking super-acid drops, has *finally* collapsed. This too recently breeched publicist might do well, before indicting the present, to take a bird's-eye view of the past, and to collate and contrast the differences between now and then. A little more than a century ago one hundred and eighty crimes were punishable with death. Child labour has been abolished; certain deadly diseases have been wiped out; antiseptics has saved millions of lives; slavery has almost ceased to be; slums are being (too slowly) exterminated; Charles Dickens helped to abolish the horrors of public executions; Charles Kingsley—the H. G. Wells of his day—advocated a lethal chamber for dangerous lunatics. "Why," he asked, "should we give them the finest air in England and the right to kill two gaolers a week?" The masses are cleaner, healthier and wiser than their forbears. I have just read a book entitled *The Stream of Time*, which deals delightfully with the changes during the past hundred years, a *causerie* based upon the letters, diaries and talk of real people. It is impossible to escape the conviction that civilization has *not* collapsed; it has advanced at excess speed, and is now confronted with the problem of adjusting over-production with redistribution and the not irreconcilable claims of men and machinery. We no longer bait bears and thrash hens, but we might with advantage pillory youthful pessimists.

I dare not affirm that the masses are happier than they were a century ago. It would be fatuous here to attempt to define happiness. When an expression of pleasure predominates over that of pain, the ordinary

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observer is justified in the use of that over-belaboured word. Fifty years ago I was struck by the look of happiness radiating from the faces of the Italian *contadini*. The young people, especially, displayed the smile which St. Michael craved of God for them. The conditions under which they lived were, from a material point of view, immensely worse than present conditions. In California I knew many members of the Italian colony in our county. They had lost St. Michael's smile; they had lost what I held to be their racial love of life. What has been paradoxically called the *divine* spirit of discontent informed nearly all of them. They were making money, they were well-fed and educated, but they wanted more than the gods gave them. It may be the same in England to-day; and most regretfully I think it is. A small boy is unhappy because he doesn't possess a bicycle; a young man craves a motor-bike; when he is a few years older he must have a small car. In a word the young people are never satisfied with what they have. The writer of the article which provoked these lines is young, healthy, popular, with a generous measure of fame, and, presumably, of the wealth that fame brings. And so one asks wonderingly: "What's amiss with the lad?"

§ IV

MANY marriages take place before Lent. The day of the week on which you were born is a lucky day to be married. Does the bridegroom allow the bride to choose the day? Let us hope so. In the Mendips and Cotswolds there may be still old gammers who believe that on the wedding

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night, the first to go to sleep will be the first to die. No pins must be left near the person of the bride when her maids bed her. But the maid who secretes a pin will be married within the year. The proverb which begot Herrick's line: "Blest is the bride on whom the sun doth shine" means that a marriage should take place in the eye of day and not clandestinely. Grey horses, postboys in white hats, and wedding cake frosted with sugar are emblematical of purity. If you see a flight of birds, as a couple go to church to be married, it foretells a quiverful of children. The French have a tag: "*Les mariages heureux se font pendant la lune croissante.*" Sir John Sinclair says that in Orkney the islanders marry on a flowing tide. We have this proverb in Somerset:

So many draps (of rain)
So many raps (blows in married life).

The bride must wear

*Something old, something new,
Something borrowed, something blue.*

If you carry a nutmeg in your pocket, you'll marry an old man.

The curious custom of "Roapin' 'em in" still survives. I am indebted to Miss Russ, the Deputy Director of our Public Library, for the following excerpt from *The Bath Chronicle* of the 23rd April, 1930:

A wedding was just ended, and as the bridal party walked down the path, their exit was stopped by a well tied-up gate: "Roapin' 'em in" as the dialect of North Somerset has it. Not until the bridegroom had paid toll—not less than half-a-

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crown for drinking healths is expected—were the couple allowed to take refuge from the showers of confetti, rose-petals and silver shoes, in the waiting car. Their troubles were not yet over, however, for some few yards from the church a further barrier in the shape of a ladder held across the road showed the desire of other villagers to have a free drink. But our bridegroom was not to be caught twice and showed himself thrifty as well as generous, for the car gently but firmly insisted on going forward and the thirsty ones had to give way.

From a query made a few years ago in a Somerset paper it appears that in most places this Somerset custom has practically died out, the last recorded incident at Radstock occurring in 1908, while as a general rule it has not been practised for the last quarter of a century.

Brand devotes several chapters to marriage customs long obsolete. The wedding ring was placed on the fourth finger (counting the thumb as a finger) of the left hand, because it was believed (quite erroneously) that a small artery connected that finger with the heart. In the famous York Missal, which I saw the other day, the ring is directed to be put first upon the thumb, afterwards upon the second, then on the third, and lastly on the fourth finger, where it is to remain. The right hand was exempt, because it was more used than the left. Ancient wedding rings were set with jewels.

It is significant that the saws concerning the Holy State are so unflattering. There is one notable exception: "As your wedding ring wears, your cares will wear away." Probably disgruntled old bachelors were the authors of nine-tenths of the tags still in current use. Lean, in his *Collectanea*, gives dozens of them.

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§ v

MONDAYS and Saturdays in Lent were known as scrambling days, when no regular meals were provided and the members of our great families scrambled. Shakespeare speaks in Henry V of "the scrambling and unquiet time", but Hone never mentions the word, and I cannot find it in Pepys or Evelyn. Mr. Dyer, in his *British Popular Customs*, mentions an old household book of the fifth Earl of Northumberland in which there is a section appointing the order of service for these days, and so regulating the licentious contentions of them. The adjective is illuminating. Liberty in the good old days too often degenerated into licence and licentiousness. The *Century Dictionary* defines *scrambling* as a hasty or "scratch" meal. I commend the word to the framers of our more difficult Crossword Puzzles.

§ vi

WHAT would Februus, a god of the lower world, have thought of Ash Wednesday and our Communion Service? I recall with regret, tempered by amusement, the unction with which certain saintly matrons and aged virgins in our village mouthed the "Amens", undismayed by the fear that curses *might* come home to roost. Possibly Collop Monday and Pancake Tuesday caused atrabiliary disturbance. The hearty cursing in church walks in my memory hand in hand with the salt cod set before us children at the midday dinner. We were not offered grey peas, despite the proverb: "Eat pancakes on Shrove Tuesday and

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grey peas on Ash Wednesday, and you will have money all the year."

In the England-that-was ashes (preferably from the palm) were consecrated, sprinkled with holy water, and given by the priests to parishioners to scatter upon their heads with the admonition: "Remember, Man, thou art dust, and shalt return to dust."

I quote Herrick's noble lines *To keep a true Lent*:

*Is this a Fast, to keep
The larder leane
And cleane,
From fat of veales and sheep?*

*Is it to quit the dish
Of flesh, yet still
To fill
The platter high with fish?*

*Is it to faste an houre,
Or rag'd to go,
Or how
A downcast look and sowe?*

*No; 'tis a Fast to dole
Thy sheaf of wheat,
And meat,
Unto the hungry soule.*

*It is to fast from strife,
From old debate,
And hate;
To circumcise thy life.*

*To show a heart grief-rent,
To starve thy sin,
Not bin;
And that's to keep thy Lent.*

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§ VII

IT is impossible to take leave of February without saying a word about leap-year. Is there reason as well as rhyme in the old adage: "A leap-year is never a good sheep year?"

Master, be contented ; this is Leap-year.

Women wear breeches ; petticoats are dear.

I find no reference to leap-year and its customs in the books of reference to which I have had access. Shakespeare never mentions it. When and where was it first deemed permissible for a maid to have her way with a man? Statistics show that, despite the extra day, there are fewer marriages in leap-year than in other years. This clamours for explanation, *if it be true*. In California I assisted at leap-year parties, when the men had to play wall-flowers, and at one a bevy of laughing maids ignored the presence of a handsome young gentleman who had exercised too censoriously his previous rights of selection. He left in a huff before supper was served, a supper supplied and paid for by the spinsters.

February is a month of enchantments, and I'm loth to see it give place to blustering March. Elia speaks somewhere of the hermits as seeking solitude to "enjoy one another's want of conversation". Our woodland garden in February is a silent sanctuary of joyous expectation because the daffodils and narcissi are still in hiding.

To hunting men February is *the* month of the year, because the shooting season is over, and they can give undivided energies to horse and hound. I suggest to non-hunting persons that the pleasures of the chase

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may be theirs if the quest of charm beguiles fancy and leisure. It is *not* the month to take the road in search of quaint villages, but the Cheddar caves hang out a lure ; and the Cheddar Gorge is starkly magnificent at any season of the year. Of the two famous caves—Cox's and Gough's—the smaller is to me the more enchanting, a fairyland of many-coloured stalactites and stalagmites reflected in limpid pools round which surely the Little People tread their measures when the winds whistle down the gorge outside. In these caverns the temperature remains the same in winter and summer ; and in February the ubiquitous tripper is not. A cynic might speak of the Cheddar Caves as a shilling peep-show on any bank holiday or throughout the summer season. The electric light, cunningly installed, reveals innumerable "shows" ; and in these the visitors are invited to observe microcosmic Niagaras and temples. The guide, poor fellow, does his best, but charm vanishes. He indicates a stalactite within three inches of the stalagmite below, and informs an incredulous crowd that the twain may meet and form a pillar in three thousand years, provoking from the wit of the party the remark : " Say, when those two link up, cable ME at your expense."

Some of these tiny pillars might be made of alabaster instead of limestone. Beneath the electric light they appear to be blushing transparent. The lack-lustre eye perceives Nature's wonders ; the inattentive ear learns that prehistoric man and prehistoric animals lived here. So far—and no farther. In February it would be possible to spend an hour alone in these chambers of the remote past, and to contrast Nature's architecture with Man's. You will find nearly everything that may be found in the stately fane of Wells

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hardly a dozen miles distant, but the miniature temples in the Cheddar Caves have taken a million years to build !

The village, at the foot of the gorge, was, till a few years ago, as quaint and beautiful as Castle Combe ; but it has been vulgarized. If you can eliminate booths, where picture postcards and sixpenny cheeses (made in America) are sold, glaring advertisements, motor 'buses, and the like, you may be able to envisage Cheddar as it was. There is a mere which I would travel far to see, and houses built into (and of) the overhanging rocks. You pass from pastoral England into the Saxon Switzerland. Before the discovery of the caves this village must have been one of the most quietly beautiful hamlets in the kingdom, but looking at the escarpments and bastions of limestone I thought of the fear-defying people who live on the edge of Vesuvius. I asked what appeared to be the oldest inhabitant if rocks now and again did not disturb his peace, but he replied emphatically : " Never."

The road from the village winds up and up through the Gorge after passing the Lion's Head Rock. At each turn new beauties are revealed. A geologist told me that the Gorge had been once a colossal cave. When did its roof fall in ? Here, above the village, rocks *do* come crashing down and are sold to lovers of rock gardens. Clearing the land of rocks has been, so I'm told, a never-failing source of revenue to Lord Bath's tenants.

Another cave, Wookey Hole, where relics of cave-dwellers were found in 1908, lies between Cheddar and Wells. At Wookey is a delightful tea-garden, not so delightful in February. I shall bespeak here a pilgrimage to Wells in May.

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§ VIII

ONE word of warning to those who in winter-time take the road to unfrequented spots in our West Country. Carry the best map procurable. How often I have wriggled through interminable lanes without meeting a soul! And the Zoomerzet yokel is a mine of inaccurate information if you ask him to tell you the best and shortest way to any place not on his map. A stout and indignant owner and driver of a car ill-adapted to climb our steepest hills told a tale of wasted endeavour. Lost in the Mendips, at the foot of a hill which he stigmatized as steeper than a steeple, he asked an ancient to tell him the way to his objective. The gaffer shook his head: he had heard tell of such a place, seemingly, but where 'twas he didn't know. The traveller crawled on up the hill. Nearing the top he heard a shout. Cautiously he backed down the steeple, overjoyed to find that the ancient had been joined by another gaffer. The ancient spoke querulously: "I told 'ee I'd never heard tell o' that ther pla-ace, an' my ole friend here sez he ain't never heard tell of 'un—*neither*!"

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§ I

TO the Tiber with March ! What a rampaging, roaring, robustious fellow it is, fatal to the bald-headed conqueror (and to how many others of lesser degree). Nobody, except Leigh Hunt, has a good word for him. Small wonder that hares go mad under his tyrannies.

The stormy March has come at last.

This is poetical licence. Fortunately he comes early in the year and we have time to forget him. With the ancients he was the first month. I take it that St. David intended to be born on the last day of February and missed his connection. Well, well, he did fitting penance ; ate only bread and vegetables and drank milk and water. Fortified by this diet he founded twelve monasteries. G. B. S., another vegetarian, canonized during his lifetime by devout Shavians, has written forty plays ! St. David is still honoured by the Royal Welsh Fusiliers. Dyer records the following extract taken from the *Graphic* of March the 8th, 1873 :

The drum-major, as well as every man in the regiment, wears a leek in his busby ; the goat (the mascot of this regiment) is dressed with rosettes and ribbons of red and blue. The officers have a party, and the drum-major, accompanied

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by the goat, marches round the table after dinner, carrying a plate of leeks, of which he offers one to each officer or guest who has never eaten one before, and who is bound to eat it up, standing on his chair, with one foot on the table, while the drummer beats a roll behind his chair. All the toasts are coupled with the name of St. David, nor is the memory of Toby Purcell forgotten. This worthy was gazetted major of the regiment when it was first raised, and was killed in the Battle of the Boyne.

When I first contemplated writing this book, I told a lady of my acquaintance that I wanted to say something about our saints. She replied, perhaps thoughtlessly: "Aren't sinners more interesting?" Are they? I carry an open mind, I have met some very dull sinners and one or two delightful saints. It is difficult to believe that our saints, who inspired such love and enthusiasm in their disciples, were dull dogs. I regard March as a sinner, but what rejoicing there is on earth when he repents him of his misdoings! If a March wind coos like a sucking-dove, we are so surprised and pleased that immediately we ask for trouble (and get it) by sitting out in the garden.

Some five years ago, in March, my brother and I began the making of a water garden in a copse where there was no water. But we had, most happily, an authentic wishing-well on higher ground and a sloping grade below the spring. In the copse were many fine trees: lindens, with bewhiskered boles, tall, clean beeches, a glorious horse-chestnut, an ancient yew, a wych-elm, an ash and a laburnum whose "dropping gold" illuminated a dark background at the foot of the glade. We were about to cut down an elder when we learned that its leaves, placed inside a cap, warded off the attacks of insects. Lord Baden-Powell, so we were informed, instructs his boy scouts to use these

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leaves for that purpose. In California we had discovered that gnats and mosquitoes avoided our grove of blue gums. Our copse was a wilderness of rankly growing aucubas which we cut down and rooted up. Then, to our delight, we discovered the little that was left of a child's garden. Under a thorn we unearthed a stone fountain, although the stone had disintegrated. Near the fountain, four feet underground, was the china head of a doll. This inspired the idea of making our water garden a pleasure for children, a rejuvenating process for two elderly men. The pools had to be lined with concrete, which looked horribly suburban at first, but very soon the concrete was covered with mosses and water weeds. The expensive part of the enterprise was buying rocks and the cost of their transportation. To-day our visitors believe that the water garden has been here since the Roman occupation. The rocks, when placed *in situ* were almost white. In less than three months they became grey and green. This is worth emphasizing ; so many people shrink from attempting to make such gardens, because they believe that years must pass before they are fit to be seen.

From the wishing-well we piped our streamlet to the first of our fairy pools. We have now twelve of varying size with miniature cascades between each : so tiny that we felt constrained to give them resounding names such as Niagara and Victoria Nyanza. March is *the* month for this work because, beyond pruning and "suckering", there is little to do in the garden proper.

Having grubbed up the roots of the laurels and other marauding nuisances, we planted out hundreds of the commoner ferns, which have increased and

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multiplied marvellously. Near the pools we ensconced *Osmunda Regalis*, the king fern. An Irishman of my acquaintance tells me that *Osmunda* was the name of the daughter of an Irish king, who turned his daughter out of his castle in Kerry without a rag to her back. Possibly she had disgraced herself by falling in love with an Englishman who offered to take the poor girl in her shift. And we can hear the infuriated Celt exclaiming: "By St. Patrick, sor, ye'll take the wench without her shift!" In broad daylight the princess fled from the castle, not knowing where to hide her nakedness. The Little People took pity on her. Where'er she paused the King Fern sprang up and hid her from the peeping Toms.

Osmunda, I regret to add, has not done too well with us, and the modern maid is so modest that we cannot coax one to stimulate its activities. What applies to this royal fern applies also to other plants. It is exasperating, and a sad waste of time and money, to attempt to make plants grow in a spot uncongenial to them. We have much lime in our soil, *anathema* to rhododendrons and azaleas. The following have done well: daffodils, narcissi, snowdrops, campanula, primroses, primulas, trillium, monk's-hood, fritillaries, wood violets, wood anemones, Solomon's seal, berberis, ribes, wood hyacinths, some of the columbines, and—most satisfactory of all—half a dozen varieties of *spiræa*.

In the larger pools we have turned down trout, who delight in playing hide-and-seek with us. To encourage them we have placed rocks at the bottom of the pools, but it is relevant to mention that we have not supplied food. Nature fills their larder. We tried goldfish, but the water was too cold for them. I refuse to believe

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that our troutlets are frightened of us, but they know, these precocious infants, that kingfishers are poachers and pirates.

We now survey with hypercritical eyes other water-gardens, disdaining those which look in any way artificial. Here the supreme art is indeed to conceal art. The rocks, too, must stand as they lay in the quarry. The pools conform to the undulations of the ground, no two are alike ; the cascades vary in height and breadth ; no channel should be straight, but rather a series of curves. Perhaps the most important thing, where there are trees, is to admit sunshine—and plenty of it.

§ II

I MENTIONED St. Patrick just now. His festival comes in March. So far as this now disunited kingdom is concerned, one pauses to wonder whether the patron saints work together or in rivalry. St. George, St. David, St. Patrick and St. Andrew may be at loggerheads with each other. Alban Butler says that the Irish saint lived *circa* A.D. 464 and performed the most astounding miracles. Perhaps he, not the Little People, befriended the princess Osmunda. He changed water into honey, fed plenteously fourteen thousand men with one cow, two stags and a couple of boars, and could make ships sail 'gainst wind and tide. Refused a dole of fish, he not only cursed the fishermen but their river, and from that day the river has never produced fish ! Elsewhere the saint caught fish on dry land. After his death there was no night for twelve days.

The only fly that I can find in the amber of St.

This was England

Patrick's unblemished life is that he was born near Glasgow.

How many of us know the legend of the shamrock? It seems that the saint was hard put to it to explain the mystery of the Trinity to his Irish converts, whereupon he plucked a trefoil, exclaiming: "Is it not as possible for the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, as for these leaves, to grow upon a single stalk?" To-day, the extra leaf upon a four-leaved shamrock represents, I suppose, de Valera, to whom I give the particle, although I wonder if he is entitled to it. Ouida was the daughter of Louis Ramé. She elected to call herself *Mademoiselle de la Ramée*. Both Ouida and de Valera have subordinated fact to fiction, and indulge too riotously in adjectives.

§ III

MOTHERING SUNDAY (mid-Lent) comes in March. When I was a boy, living in Hursley, the village where Keble wrote *The Christian Year*, our maid-servants used to carry Simnel cakes to their mothers.

*I'll to thee a simnell bring
'Gainst thou goes a mothering.
So that when she blesseth thee
Half that blessing thou'lt give me.*

Herewith our recipe for Simnel cake, which is—to use the admirable Mrs. Beeton's phrase—seasonable at any time: "Beat to a cream one pound of sugar and one pound of butter, add a pound of flour, one pound's weight of eggs, weighed in their shells, stir in lightly three-quarters of a pound of well-washed

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currants and four ounces of shredded citron. Make an almond paste with twelve ounces of castor sugar, two eggs and six ounces of ground almonds, and colour it with saffron. Put half the cake mixture into a lined cake-tin, add the almond paste, and lastly the second layer of the cake mixture. Bake in a moderate oven for one and a quarter hours." There are other recipes, but this is excellent.

Saffron is affirmed to have been a monopoly of an Indian rajah, but an English pilgrim, during the reign of Edward III, stole a bulb which he planted at Walden in Essex, and such a harvest of flowers came from it that the place is known to this day as Saffron Walden. The stigmas of the saffron crocus were made into a cordial, and a hair-dye was expressed from the juice of the flowers. It takes four thousand flowers to make one ounce of saffron, so the old saw "as dear as saffron" justifies itself. The industry died out in England towards the close of the eighteenth century. The streets were sprinkled with saffron when Nero made his entry into Rome, and it was highly esteemed as a drug during the Middle Ages, although much more popular as a dye. Mantles of Irish kings were dyed with saffron. One grain imparts a yellow tint to ten gallons of water.

The more youthful of our maids have never heard of Mothering Sunday or Simnel cakes. A lady of my acquaintance tells me that in her day the maids who were unable to make or buy a Simnel cake took to their mothers some other gift.

Another Lenten custom, long obsolete in this kingdom, was stoning Jews, and the Jews who desired to be exempt from the infliction of this cruelty commuted for a payment in money.

This was England

§ IV

DELVING into dusty tomes in search of information about saffron, I came across long lists of "simples" used medicinally by the monks and friars of pre-Reformation days. The gammers in Dorset and Somerset still speak of monk's hood, friar's cowl, our Lady's slipper, Job's tears and the milkwort (which increased the flow of milk in nursing mothers). These "wise" women prescribe dandelion tea as a spring medicine to quicken a too sluggish liver; and they have faith in snails as a specific against consumption. Good luck will be forthcoming if you take (if you can) a black snail by the horns and toss it over your left shoulder. Some of the old miners in our county hold it to be bad luck if you see the first snail of the year creeping along a bare stone, but misfortune can be averted if you drop a piece of tallow beside the traveller. In the Mendips, if a maiden puts a snail on a pewter platter, on May-day Eve, it will reveal, as it crawls, the initials of her true lover. Old Burton, whose *Anatomy of Melancholy* is a perpetual feast to the curious reader, gives the following plants well known to our herbalists—and to nobody else: for the heart—borage, bugloss, saffron, balm, basil, rosemary and violets; for the liver—germander, agrimony, fennel, endive, liverwort and barberries; for the stomach—wormwood, mints, betony, sorrel and purslain; for the kidneys—grumel, parsley, saxifrage, plantain and mallow; and so on and so forth almost *ad nauseam*. Apart from their tisanes, the gammers still make ointments. Brusher Mills, a famous viper-catcher and character in the New Forest, sold adders' fat, and never—so he cheerfully told me

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—lacked customers. Many of our best-selling patent medicines owe their virtue to the nostrums and cure-alls of our old women.

§ v

THE 20th of March used to be considered the first day of Spring, because on that day the sun entered Aries. All gardeners prefer a belated spring.

Care Sunday comes in March, the fifth Sunday in Lent.

*Care Sunday, care away,
Palm Sunday and Easter Day.*

Carlings were doles made out of peas fried in butter. Shakespeare never mentions them. Hone remarks humorously that there was little else to bestow upon the needy poor at such a season.

Lady Day follows, once a bank holiday, spoken of as "gaudy day". A letter, written by some country blade to a lady of quality and addressed: "To the 25th of March, Foley Place, London," was duly delivered to Lady Day. Napier may have heard this story when he sent the curt despatch "*Peccavi*". (I have Scinde.)

Lady Day is only known to the man in the street as the first quarter, when rents are due. The happy landlords of the England *that was* expected presents in addition to prompt payment of rents.

*And when the tenants come to paie their quarter's rent,
They bring some fowle at Midsummer, a dish of fish in Lent;
At Christmasse a capon, at Michaelmasse a goose,
And somewhat else at New Yeare's tide for feare their lease flie
loose.*

This was England

In the England that is landlords have too often to remit rents to keep their leases tight.

Of Figpie Sunday I know nothing, except that the pies were not made of figs.

Biddenden cakes were given to the poorer inhabitants of Biddenden in Kent on Easter Sunday. Upon each cake was imprinted the figures of the Biddenden Sisters, who, like the Two-headed Nightingale of my youth, were joined together by the hips and shoulders and continued in that condition for thirty years till they died. Hasted, however, declares that these twins, who lived in the twelfth century, were not the original donors of the cake, giving credit to two maidens of the name of Preston, and that the print on the cakes merely represents two widows as the objects of the pious benefaction. The Misses Preston lived many centuries after the death of the twins!

As a story-teller I contend that tales should improve in the telling. That is the first duty of a *raconteur*: to embellish his facts if they are facts. I make no apology for giving an instance of such pardonable (and almost inevitable) accretion. In our West Country are the ruins of a feudal castle. One of the lords of the castle happened to be a crusader. It was a cankering grievance that his lady provided him with no heir. Sensible, poor woman, that her happiness (and his) was in the melting pot, she procured a fine fat baby boy which she presented to her lord as the pledge of their affections. Long years afterwards the truth leaked out. . . . Now, that is the end of the true story; and we are left in mid-air. A man I know provided a thrilling sequel. The lady found herself in an interesting condition which might have happened previously. In due time she was delivered of a boy even more

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bouncing than the first. And she alone knew that a too healthy bastard had robbed her son of his birth-right. She prayed God to forgive her, and then murdered the bastard. That same night, the lawful heir was drowned in the castle moat—now dry. This new version of an old story is now accepted as the whole truth. The obvious moral is—balm to all novelists—that fiction may be even stranger than truth.

I have strayed down a bypath, a bosky lane, but let it be regarded as a shelter from the Martian blasts.

§ VI

IN March my fancy lightly turns to Bristol Cream, the noblest sherry of them all. Every wine has its season, and March is the month for sherry, now coming into its own again. You will find in Bath eighteenth-century wine labels. I was given two the other day which showed signs of much use ; and yet the names upon them were unfamiliar to me—Prenaac and Calcavella. These names sent me hot-foot to Cyrus Redding's book on *Wines*. He spells Calcavella *Carcavellos*. The wine is what our grandfathers called Lisbon. Prenaac I take to be Prignac, a bas-Médoc claret. My edition of Redding was published in 1833, and spelling was not the author's long suit, for he spells Lafite with two f's. Ever since I beguiled my leisure by writing about wine, I have been asked again and again : "What is sack?" There were three sacks : Canary, Xerez, and Malaga. Sack, in short, was like a second-rate Madeira. Redding cites Falstaff's remark about there being too much lime in the sack, hinting, of course, at adulteration. Sackmead

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was mead laced with brandy. It is now, I think, generally accepted that an intolerable deal of sack may have been drunk by the Swan of Avon, but not by Falstaff, inasmuch as sack was not imported into England during the reign of Henry V. Sack comes from *sec*, although to-day we should not describe Canary as a dry wine.

Our eighteenth-century squires drank and ate to excess. Is that any reason why we should sing the praises of a crust of bread, a raw onion, and a glass of fair water? Certainly not. But when total abstainers boast of their temperance, I label them intemperate. Unhappily our general practitioners, taking them by and large, know next to nothing about good wine. Bad wine is indeed a mocker and a shocker. Good wine—as a bishop once observed—is one of God's best creatures. In France, where the medical profession ranks quite as high as ours, it is very rarely that a doctor puts his patient on the water waggon. Wine drinkers in wine-making countries are as healthy as water-drinkers elsewhere, and less liable to the ills of indigestion. One of our eminent physicians, as fine a judge of wine as he is of men, told me this. I am tempted to cite my own experience in the hope that it may deter my fellow-countrymen from giving up the moderate use of the nobler red wines in too slavish obedience to the dictates of doctors who have no experience of their virtues. More than twenty years ago I fell ill in Dublin with a bad attack of inflammatory rheumatism. I was treated by a famous doctor who was half French and half Irish. When I was convalescent he asked me if I craved any special article of diet after a dreary fortnight of abstinence. I told him that my fancy dwelt upon the best claret,

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a *château* growth. This interested him. He then said, to my surprise and jubilation: "You can drink in moderation good red wine as long as you live, if you will forswear sweets." Now gout and its kindred rheumatic affections were my inheritance. I make no doubt that the sweet puddings which I had eaten declared war upon the red wines. I forswore sweets, and ever since I have been free from rheumatism. I touch wood as I record this significant fact. Another famous doctor made a remark about smoking which is worth setting down. I was not his patient, merely a friend. We smoked pipes whilst playing together a round of golf. He taxed me with smoking too many pipes, admitting at the same time that he was not rationing himself. "But," he added, with a twinkle in a jolly eye, "I seldom in my own practice condemn a slight abuse of Nicotina, because if a man past middle age smokes too much, he eats less, and more people die of over-eating than over-smoking." Whereupon I told him of my abstention from sweets, which he commended. We exchanged a word or two about snuff. I happened to own a beautiful snuff-mull. About five years ago we bought a small quantity of the Regent's favourite mixture. Up to that time both my brother and myself suffered increasingly from colds. We acquired the habit of taking a pinch after luncheon and dinner. We are now free from colds in the head. Snuff, let it be noted, should be fresh. It soon loses its fragrance and pungency. It is also cheap. Place a pinch upon the forefinger; inhale gently. If you snuff it up too avidly you will sneeze or choke. The right conduct from nostril to antrum is a gentlemanly ritual. We have been surprised to discover that many elderly friends of ours (and a few younger men) take

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snuff, and all of them *without one exception* declare that they do not suffer from colds.

I return to wine. March is also a burgundy month. Claret is better suited to April and May. It is easy to buy good sound claret from any reputable wine-merchant ; it is not so easy to buy good burgundy, and the curious may learn the reason if they take the trouble to read Paul de Cassagnac's illuminating book on the Wines of France admirably translated by my friend, Guy Knowles. The *propriétaires* in the Côte d'Or are less conscientious than the *propriétaires* in the Médoc. Crude burgundy is the devil——! The Belgians, oddly enough, secure the best burgundy ; and—during the war—they hid their nectar from the thirsty Hun. One connoisseur sank the king of wines in a pond in his garden. A German general happened to notice a number of pieces of paper on the surface of the pond. He raked out one bearing the inscription Grand Vin, Chambertin——! The bottles lay safe at the bottom of the pond ; the labels had floated up ! The general drank that burgundy with, let us hope, a humble and grateful heart.

A noble hock dispels the rigours of March, but again noble hocks are hard to come by and very expensive. Inferior hocks and moselles are detestable.

§ VII

I BESPEAK March as a month which might profitably be spent in Bath. A cockstride will transport you to the eighteenth century. Look at the costumes exhibited in the Grand Pump Room. A *débutante*, visiting Bath during the reign of George II, must have carried with her a bandbox as big as a Saratoga trunk.

March

I quote some lines from Mr. Dion Calthrop's *English Costumes* :

*In a bandbox is contained . . .
Painted lawns and chequered shades,
Crape that's worn by lovelorn maids,
Watered tabbies, flowered brocades,
Straw-built hats, and bonnets green,
Catgut, gauzes, tippets, ruffs,
Fans and hoods and feathered muffs,
Stomachers and Paris nets,
Earrings, necklaces, aigrets,
Fringes, blouses, mignonets.
Fine vermilion for the cheek,
Velvet patches à la Grecque.
Come, but don't forget the gloves
Which, with all the smiling loves,
Venus caught young Cupid picking
From the tender breast of chicken.*

After reading the above you can resurrect the belles of Bath as they walked our parades. The beaux were as gorgeously apparelled.

How many curiosity shops are here? More, I am sure, than in any other town of its size in this or any kingdom. Even in the humblest one may find a bargain. The Holburne Museum, at the east end of Pulteney Street, contains a remarkable collection of old English plate pictures, miniatures, porcelain and furniture. The curator is the most courteous and enthusiastic *cicerone*, if you can coax him to show you his treasures.

In the entrance hall of the museum are two superb Chippendale chairs presented by a lady who once lived in the Circus. Mr. Charles Angell, of Milsom Street, tells me that long ago this lady sent for him and asked him if he would buy these chairs. Mr.

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Angell offered her two hundred and fifty pounds for them. She expressed pleasure and astonishment. "But," said she, "*if* they are worth as much as that I shall either keep them or give them away." Had Mr. Angell offered fifty guineas, the lady would have sold them willingly enough.

This led, as such talk does, to other stories connected with values. Dealers in old furniture wish to buy in the cheapest market and to sell in the dearest. That is sound business. But, as a matter of fact, especially in these days of depleted purses, dealers too often buy dear and sell cheap. They rely upon their happy "flukes". Within the past year Mr. Angell secured two gilded alms dishes for fourteen pounds. The dishes were carefully examined by some fifty dealers. Mr. Angell sold them for twenty pounds. Later on they were discovered to be of purest gold and worth about a thousand pounds. I must tell a story which Mr. Angell tells against himself. He was showing the western front of our Abbey to two American ladies, who noticed the headless angels climbing the ladders on each side of the porch. "Who are those figures?" asked one lady. "They are the fallen angels climbing up to Heaven," replied Mr. Angell. The other lady said slyly: "Indeed, and I suppose one fallen angel meandered into Milsom Street."

Much of Chippendale's furniture, as portrayed in his book entitled, *The Gentleman's and Cabinet Maker's Directory of Household Furniture*, was designed but never made. Orders were not forthcoming.

I am beguiled by the nooks and alleys of Bath which are "round the corner". Many houses are said to be haunted. We have here a *revenante* who—so we have been assured—perambulates our terrace, but as

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yet we have not been privileged to see her. In one still stately house a child-spirit plays with living children, who have testified to this, and the ghost has been espied now and again by adults. From a third mansion wounded soldiers had to be removed during the war because their peace was disturbed by unearthly noises and by the touch of invisible hands. I was invited to write about the haunted houses of Bath, but, unhappily, all our ghost stories vary too much in the telling; the truth, if there be truth, is embedded in fiction. As I write these lines I can see above me a portrait of my great-great-uncle, the wicked (so-called) Thomas, Lord Lyttelton. Upon the tips of his slim fingers Cosway has portrayed the draped figure of a ghostly visitant who warned my lord that within three days, at the stroke of midnight, his soul would be demanded of him. This ghost story was accepted and accredited by many men of that day. My grandfather, who inherited the picture, never believed in the ghost story, because there were so many discrepancies in the different narratives. But, nevertheless, the well-attested fact stands out that the wicked Thomas, after telling his friends of the visitation and prediction, *did* pass from this world at the appointed time.

§ VIII

THERE are enchanting names in our West Country. I have asked my brother to suggest what he takes to be best; and he replied without hesitation St. Anthony-in-Roseland, a village, or rather a hamlet, in Cornwall. This to me is as captivating as another name which Mr. Thomas Burke found on the sign-board of an ancient inn—*The Open Arms*. I have

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put that name into my latest novel. Midsomer Norton, not far from here, suggests the Midsummer Night's Dream. Lostwithiel, Maiden Bradley, Berryнарbor, Cheddon-Fitzpaine—and scores of others—tickle the fancy, but some arouse an expectation which is not glutted when you see them. Also it is difficult, often impossible, to obtain information about these suggestive names, even as it is difficult to find out the names of our country bridge-builders. In the Middle Ages sins were remitted and indulgences accorded to those who built bridges, and there were guilds of lay-brotherhoods who repaired them.

I must deal with our names of enchantment at a less inclement season, when we wander afield. Meanwhile, March, in no uncertain voice, is clamouring for more attention. He brags that gunpowder was first used on the 28th day of his month, in 1380, by the Venetians. He is mistaken. It was used in a battle near Mecca in 690. The oriflamme in his helmet is the daffodil.

*Then comes the Daffodil beside
Our Lady's Smock at our Ladye Tide.*

Our Lady's Smock is the Cardamine, or Cuckoo flower, which delights in marshy meadows even as the daffodil does. It must not be confounded with the cuckoo-pint which grows in our hedges. Our Lady's Smock was held to be a noted blood purifier; its young leaves, which have a pungent taste, make an agreeable salad.

Daffodils, jonquils and narcissi are now listed in our seed catalogues as blood relations. Everybody knows the story of Narcissus who "gazed at himself in the stream's recess till he died of his own sweet loveliness".

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But it is not so well known that Echo fell in love with him, and that the beauteous youth was so impassioned with himself that he scorned her advances. Echo, however, must have been of a forgiving nature. When Narcissus died, or, as a brutal commentator suggests, fell into the river and was deservedly drowned, Echo and her attendant nymphs decided to bury the body. They could not find it. In its place bloomed the flower we love. I found this romantic story in a book entitled *Myths and Legends of Flowers*, by Charles Skinner, which, if it is not out of print, would make a charming present for a flower-loving child. In this book I rediscovered what I had forgotten; the ancient legend of the snowdrop, the virgin flower, fashioned by a pitying angel out of a snowflake, and given to Mother Eve when she was dismayed to wake up and behold the garden of Eden covered with snow——! In our West Country it is deemed unlucky to carry the first snowdrop into the house. To present it to a person of the opposite sex implies a wish to see the recipient dead.

The daffodils, and their first cousins, who “come before the swallow dares, and take the winds of March with beauty”, do indeed “haste away too soon”. Were they born in May they might linger longer with us. Herrick speaks of divination by daffodils. If the first daffy you see hangs down her head, and if it is inclined in your direction, you too will decline and die. Mr. Barney Maguire, in his graphic account of Queen Victoria’s coronation, mentions the ladies (and the Miss O’Gradys) as adorning themselves all by candle-light with “roses and lilies and daffy-down-dillies”. But the Queen was crowned upon June the 28th, 1838. Were the daffy-down-dillies accorded a longer lease of life in her honour?

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The captivating name, Lent Lily, is now too seldom used. Somebody has well said that there is religion in gardening ; but surely it is paganism to abandon old English names of common flowers. I refuse to call snapdragon *antirrhinum*. Any young woman who discards forget-me-not in favour of *myosotis* ought to be condemned to wear sky-blue stockings for the rest of her unnatural life. Has she forgotten that, centuries ago, a true lover leapt into the swiftly-flowing Danube to procure for his sweetheart a bunch of flowers, blue as the maiden's eyes, which were growing upon an ait in mid-stream. He plucked the flowers, and was seized when returning with a cramp. He had strength enough to fling the posy at her feet, exclaiming : "Forget me not !", and disappeared for ever.

In the New Forest gypsies used to steal our daffodils. I happened to mention this to a friend learned in the law who told me that both daffodils and mushrooms, where they grow wild on private property, can be picked with impunity by the passer-by. If you summon the thief, you must prove that you planted the daffodil bulbs, or scattered mushroom spawn on your field. Is this true ? The laws concerning trespass are in favour of the trespasser, if he knows what to do. The late Sir Edward Marshall Hall assured me that I could look for (and find if I could) a lost golf ball in a field where a signboard warned all and sundry that they would be prosecuted if found trespassing, provided I tendered the irate owner three pennies for damage done in the presence of a witness. That is, apparently, the legal way of whipping the devil round the stump.

Our children, with a little encouragement from the Olympians, will go on using the old-fashioned names. A walk with a bevy of them can be made both inter-

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esting and exciting, if a small prize is offered to the collector of the greatest number of wild flowers *who knows their names*. At a parish fête, held recently in our garden, my brother and I offered such a prize. Competition was eager and enlightening. The village children remembered names which their parents had forgotten. Cheers for the rising generation! I have noticed, too, that the masses rather than the classes are not to be beguiled into the abuse of euphemism. *À propos* I set down what I read recently in the *Morning Post* from the nimble pen of Peter Simple:

I am indebted to a maid in a block of flats, where a friend of mine lives, for a remarkably illuminating essay in psycho-analysis. The two dominating personalities in the building are an actress, living on the first floor, who is much given to temperamental outbursts, and the proprietress of the flats, who is equally inclined to go off the deep end. This morning both the actress and the proprietress had been more emotional than usual, and the maid took an early opportunity of confiding her woes to a friendly milkman. "When it's the mistress," she explained, "it's nerves, and when it's the actress it's temperament, and when it's a maid of the likes of me it's just blinking temper."

§ IX

IT would take more than a month of Sundays to know Bath as a man of Cheshire is said to know his cheese. Cheshire cheese is at its best when it's old and crumbly. The famous houses here are also old and crumbly. It would be decorously fitting to visit them in a Bath-chair. Before making such pious pilgrimages you would do well to read Mr. Meehan's *Houses of Bath*, published locally in 1901. Mr. Meehan is *une bonne gazette du pays*, with a sense of historical perspective.

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He has much to say about Kingston House, at Bradford-on-Avon, and its naughty duchess, but he fails to mention that it was copied and exhibited at the Paris Exhibition of 1900, where it housed a magnificent collection of English pictures which delighted all the artists and architects in *la ville lumière*. Later on, we shall wander into some of these houses. To-day I passed through Lilliput Alley where Sally Lun kept her cake-shop.

*No more I heed the muffin's zest,
The Yorkshire cake or bun ;
Sweet Muse of Pastry : teach me how
To make a Sally Lun.*

I have more than a nodding acquaintance with Number 8, Gay Street, where the Great Chan's friend, Mrs. Thrale, lived both before and after her marriage—held by some to be a *mésalliance*—to the Italian music-master, Signor Piozzi. This charming little house is more or less as it was in 1784, the year when Johnson died. Whenever I lunch there I think of the famous "circle". How many of the Prior Park Group "come back" to Number 8, Gay Street?

James Quin's house must have been a more uproarious centre of fun and hospitality. Here he brewed his famous punch, of which I have the recipe, and here he may have complained to Beau Nash of the exorbitant charges made by Bath tradesmen. Mr. Meehan records the Beau's reply: "You were a stranger and they took you in." "Aye," replied the actor, "but they have fleeced me instead of clothing me."

Quin's wit was as lively as Sheridan's, and there wasn't a tincture of the snob in him. At a party in Bath he made a brilliant sally, whereupon a nobleman

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exclaimed : " Quin, my boy, what a pity it is a clever fellow like you should be a player." Quin impaled him with the reply : " What would your lordship have me be ? A lord ? " He was a generous giver. After he had left the stage Ryan begged him to repeat one performance of Falstaff for his benefit. The veteran, who had lost two of his front teeth, wrote back : " Dear Ryan, I would play for you if I could, but I will not whistle for you. I have willed you a thousand pounds. If you want money, you may have it at once and save my executors trouble."

Beau Nash's house in St. John's Place is now a ghost of its former self. Mrs. Delany lived in it after Nash's death. It was built by Thomas Greenway, a stone-cutter, who may have built our house, but my brother and I fondly believe (and not without high authority) that our façade was taken from a design by Inigo Jones.

Lord Chesterfield's house is in Pierrepont Street. In which of the rooms did he write his letters to his son ? From this house he wrote of himself and Lord Tyrawley : " Tyrawley and I have been dead these two years, but we don't choose to have it known." This recalls a Californian bear story of my youth. A cowboy was describing what happened when he followed a wounded grizzly into thick manazanita brush : " Boys, I crawled along on my belly. Suddenly I looked up. There was Mister Bear, ten feet high, standing over me, and my Winchester was under me—— ! " A thrilled listener enquired : " Gosh ! What did you do ? " The cowboy eyed a tenderfoot disdainfully. " What in hell could I do ? I—I *died like a man.*"

April

April

§ I

APRIL—capricious nymph!—snuggles into my heart because during many seasons a generous friend has bestowed upon me three jolly weeks of salmon-fishing in Ireland. Salmon fishing, like fox-hunting, can be carried on regardless of the Clerk of the Weather. Is there an authoritative book dealing faithfully with the effect of climate upon character? This spring (1932) my friend and I adventured to the swirling Dee in Scotland, motoring all too swiftly from London to Dinnet, thereby confirming my conviction that speed is the deadly enemy of observation. If I were younger I should be an impassioned “hiker,” not counting the milestones nor priding myself, as the French put it, upon “eating” the miles. However, on this occasion we took our ease in several inns where the food, beds and general entertainment satisfied expectation. Repetition being the soul of rhetoric I shall repeat what I have said elsewhere: the wine lists of the bigger inns and hotels slake nothing beyond the ordinary thirst. If you are happily content with beer or whisky-and-soda all is very well. Fine wines are exorbitantly dear and—if we except champagne—too conspicuously absent. There would be an increasing demand for a sound, palate-tickling Médoc or Beaune if it were supplied

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at two shillings a pint—which can be done. One sighs in vain for the “*petits vins*” and “*la bonne cuisine régionale*” of pre-war France. As a rule wines are offered to an indiscriminating public at twice the price paid by the management. This profiteering defeats its own ends. Again, in the case of the nobler wines we are denied information about the vintages, an important matter. It is bad business for all concerned.

One of Mr. Punch's Learned Clerks sent me *The English Inn*, by Thomas Burke, at the time it was published (1930) which I read forthwith. Mr. Burke, like Mr. H. V. Morton, has vivid powers of description and a captivating enthusiasm which will carry a writer far on any road or bypath. In his *Limehouse Nights* I was uncomfortably conscious that the author seemed to prefer the fish-like smells of Wapping Old Stairs to, say, rosewater. In *The English Inn* I inhale gratefully the fragrance of our countryside. Like Mr. Morton again, Mr. Burke takes his reader with him. Indeed, when commending these books to others I have suggested that a stay-at-home is likely to see more of England through the eyes of these gentlemen than through his own. They are both weavers of spells, and each, after his own fashion, has accomplished what I am trying to do in these pages, a summoning-up of the England that was hiding behind the England that is. It seemed to me, when I read *The English Inn*, that Mr. Burke had cast a glamour, or, quite possibly, he had been more fortunate than myself in his experience of roadside taverns. But now I must admit joyfully that our inns are improving because demand for kindlier treatment has at last stimulated supply. On Deeside, in Profeit's Hotel, my friend and I found not only material comfort but admirable

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service, the wish to please and the intelligence which anticipates the needs of the wayfarer. I have never felt more at home than I did in Profeit's Hotel.

§ II

THE humours of All Fools' Day are vanishing together with jokes about mothers-in-law, twins, and what-not, which formerly provoked gusts of Homeric laughter in our music-halls. It is humiliating to record that I cannot set down one superlative instance of successful fooling engineered by myself when I was a boy, but we children were, I remember, enjoined by my mother to attempt nothing likely to distress our victims, a counsel of perfection which cramped our endeavours. Out of a mass of material, not personal experiences, I cull the best of the April Fool stories. It is recorded by Dyer in his *British Customs* :

"A prince of the house of Lorraine, confined in one of Louis XIII's prisons, made his escape on the First of April by swimming across the moat, and is accordingly commemorated as a *poisson d'Avril* to this day. Why this should be so is not very clear, inasmuch as the gaolers and not the prince would have been the April fools on the occasion. A later version of the same story would appear to be the correct one. Here the prince and his wife, escaping in the disguise of peasants on the 1st of April, were recognized by a serving-maid as they were passing out of the castle gates. She immediately made for the guard-room, giving the alarm to a sentinel by the way, but unfortunately for her, yet happily for the fugitives, although she may have forgotten that it was All Fools' Day, the soldiers on guard had not. The information was treated with the utmost contempt, the soldiers declining to be made game of, and while the royal prison-breakers got clear off, it is said that the luckless informer was soundly buffeted by the guard for her ill-timed jocularity. . . ."

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What thrilling use Alexandre Dumas would have made of this story, had he known it.

Addison writes disdainfully of the custom of making April fools. Possibly he, the grave and reverend signior, was himself a victim.

Do youngsters still go to the village cobbler to demand a pennyworth of the best stirrup oil, receiving a cut from the strap? Does anybody inquire at a bookseller's for "The Life and Adventures of Eve's Mother"?

*The First of April some do say,
Is set apart for All Fools' Day;
But why the people call it so,
Nor I nor they themselves do know.*

Nobody knows, although conjectures have been hazarded. Noah, it has been suggested, was the first April fool, when he sent the dove from the ark before the waters had abated.

§ III

WE passed through Selby on our way north and wondered how many pilgrims from overseas had looked at George Washington's arms in the windows of the choir. The abbey was once the third richest in the kingdom; it is now, probably, the poorest. But it remains—magnificent, a monument of Church building from the Norman to the Perpendicular. Benedict of Auxerre, a monk, took a finger from the lifeless body of his patron saint, St. Germain, and leaving Auxerre, crossed the seas and sailed up the river Ouse till he came to what is now Selby. Since his day, thousands of ships on their way to York have passed the noble tower of the great abbey founded

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by this monk. Long before him the Ouse was known as the Tiber of Humbria. The Romans sailed up it, and the Danes. Cawood, not far from Selby, is higher up on the left bank of the river. Here, till the time of the Civil War, the archbishops lived in princely splendour. In 1628, the son of a farmer, a native of Cawood, became primate of York. Mr. Edmund Bogg speaks of him as an apt punster, well-served by his ready wit. When the See of York became vacant Charles the Martyr was at a loss for some time to name a fit person for such a high office. He asked for Bishop Montaign's advice, who replied: "Had'st thou faith as a grain of mustard seed, thou would'st say to this mountain" (at the same time laying his hand upon his breast) "be thou removed into that See."

The Wharfedale country radiates the charm of the past. Would that we could have lingered longer in it, before pressing on to York. We crossed the Ouse not far from the spot where Dick Turpin swam Black Bess across the river on his famous ride. The inns are quaintly delightful, the "tykes" are shrewder than they were. A Yorkshireman told me that a farmer of to-day, speaking of the statute hirelings of forty years ago, recalled a "Turnip Top" who had been in his service for three years. For the first year he was paid seven pounds, for the second eight, for the third nine. His master suggested that he should have another pound rise for the next year. He thereupon declared that he was not going to deal in "punds". "Mak it guineas," he proposed, adding that he was prepared to start afresh and to remain on another year at seven guineas. I can cap this story with an experience of my own dealing with an ex-Master of Hounds. I offered one hundred and fifty pounds for

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a hunter, which my friend refused. I offered guineas. Without calculating, the owner said : "I'll take a hundred and fifty-five pounds." A few minutes later he realized that he had lost fifty shillings over the deal.

H. V. Morton speaks of a shield in one of the Selby Abbey windows showing—if looked at from *outside*—a bend sinister, the sign of illegitimacy. When the window was repaired and releaded in 1866 this shield was placed inside out. Morton remarks : "Surely the only instance of a man being made illegitimate by a glazier's blunder." If he happens to read these lines, he may be amused to learn that an ancestor of mine was bastardized by a housemaid. His stained-glass escutcheon hangs on a window in the lobby of this house. A housemaid, taking it down to dust it, replaced it inside out, which I failed to notice till a waggish friend asked me if my ancestor was born on the wrong side of the blanket.

§ IV

HOKE DAY, or Hock-tide, comes in April. Up to the time of the Reformation Hock-money was collected by the churchwardens in their parishes. Tribute was exacted from the men on Monday, the fifteenth day after Easter Sunday, and from the women on Tuesday. So far as I can learn this meant two days' junketing, described as Hock-Day play. The roads were roped ; passengers were not allowed to pass till they had paid their footing ; and all money so collected was devoted to pious uses.

Are our Easter Mondays as joyous as were these Hoke Days and other rural merry-makings ? If you engage in conversation with the older inhabitants of

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Somerset and Dorset villages they answer the question in the negative. To a man (and woman) they affirm that life was easier and gayer fifty years ago. They don't "hold" with too much gadding about, especially pillion-riding. But behind their slow, drawling speech I seem to detect a wish to please me, whereas I am seeking reliable information, so hard to come by. Here in Bath an attempt has been made to revive Morris-dancing. I was watching the caperings, when an Ancient said disgustedly: "'Tis all ma-ake-believe, zur." And talk is mostly make-believe, as we slide from one rut to another, harking back to the ruts which are our own. With the gaffers I am sensible of the ruts dear to them; with the Bright Young People I seem to be Morris-dancing along a hard high road bordered by petrol pumps.

This afternoon I was shown a print of Bath, published in 1730. The Queen City appeared to be little more than a small town surrounded by fields, with gardens sloping to the placid Avon. John Wood found Bath much as it appears in this print. Ralph Allen, who supplied him with building material, was then thirty-seven; and on another print of the same date I saw marked the tramway which carried Allen's stones to the Avon, and thence to Bristol and London. It occurred to me that a mere written description of what has been is almost impotent to summon up the past even if a Walter Pater or a George Moore holds the pen. That is why the ordinary guide-book is so unsatisfying. On the other hand, a heavy volume, magnificently illustrated, cannot be carried about like an umbrella. An enthusiast might hire a caddy, when wandering through Old Bath, who would bear the burden of the four heavy tomes which contain illustra-

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tions of our famous houses—and a comfortable camp-stool. Has anybody ever done this ?

After staring at the 1830 print, I was shown an earlier map of the city enclosed by walls, with its four gates, and plans of the baths. Cheap Street and Stawles Street were then the main thoroughfares. No Milsom Street. A part of the wall is still in existence, but the gates of South Gate are *not* (as some affirm) at Crowe Hall, which crowns the hill above this house. Stawles Street is now Stall Street. Bath, even till recently, abounded in stalls. Two or three remain near the Abbey. Guidott, publishing this plan of "Bathe", was a physician who wrote, *circa* 1725, a book entitled : *An Account of Cures Performed and Benefits received by the Use of the Famous Hot Waters of Bathe, as they for the most part came under the Author's Experience and Observation.* I anticipated a *chronique scandaleuse*, but the learned doctor expresses himself with dignity and discretion. Humour peeps out of his brief biographies, when he mentions Dr. Ralph Bayley, "who never took any Physick himself, or made use of the Baths". Of Dr. Jordan, the first to write about the virtues of the waters, Guidott says : "His conversation was so sweet, his carriage so obliging, and his life so answerable to the port and dignity of the faculty he profest, that he had the applause of the Learned, the respect of the Rich, the prayers of the Poor, and the love of All." Then he adds slyly : "He was buried in the south Isle of the Abbey Church without any monument or any inscription." One wonders whether Dr. Jordan, with prophetic vision of the innumerable lying mural tablets which plaster the Abbey's walls, left instructions to be so unobtrusively buried ? Guidott only allows himself one slap

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at a brother physician who lived in a fine house :
" His head had skull, but no brain at all."

It is significant that these Bath doctors of the eighteenth century held high social position at a time when the ordinary General Practitioner was spoken of as a "leech". Certainly their name was Legion in Bath, and it was suggested by one of the wits that a city ordinance would be highly approved forbidding Bath to all doctors who could not show that they at least *shared* one patient with another practitioner. What animosities and rivalries must have been rampant !

After gloating over the 1830 print, too valuable and too big to carry with me, I hastened to the Public Library, where I made a list of the famous houses within a quarter-mile radius of the Abbey. Then I took the road determined to inspect the inside of what had long been familiar to me from without. I began with a small house, Number One Pierrepont Place (not if you please, Miss Sitwell, Number Five Pierrepont Street), where there is a tablet on the right of a decorative entrance commemorating the fact that the Linleys lived here from 1767 to 1771 in their days of comparative poverty. In 1771 the father of two bread-earning daughters moved to Royal Crescent. The house is within a stone's throw of the Masonic Hall in Orchard Street, once the Theatre Royal, upon whose boards Sarah Siddons, Henderson, Miss Kemble, Samuel Foote and Mrs. Farren appeared. Most of us have forgotten that women did not appear on the stage prior to 1661. Upon January the 3rd of that year, Pepys saw the *Beggars Bush* well performed. "The first time", says he, "that ever I saw a woman come upon the stage." Colley Cibber tells an amusing story about Charles II. "The king, coming before

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his usual time to a tragedy, found the actors not ready to begin ; when His Majesty, not choosing to have as much patience as his good subjects, sent to know the meaning of it ; upon which the master of the company came into the box, and rightly judging that the best excuse for their default would be the true one, fairly told His Majesty *that the queen was not shaved yet.*"

The Linley house is the centre of a small circle including Ralph Allen's house, Chesterfield House, Weymouth House, and Sally Lun's bunshop, with its original bow-window in which I noted a few panes of eighteenth-century glass. A minute later the courteous owner invited me to come in. It was as easy as that !

The two sitting-rooms have fine wooden ceilings. In one of these parlours Thomas Linley, the greatest singing master of his day, must have given lessons. Here he trained his beautiful accomplished children, Mary and Elizabeth. Elizabeth was sixteen in 1770. And to this house, which Thomas advertised as "neat and convenient", came Gainsborough, then a man about thirty-three. I have been looking to-day at his portrait by himself, in the possession of my friend, Mr. Shirley-Fox, painted probably about this date. He is wearing a wig. In the picture taken when he was twenty-five he wears his own hair. In this later portrait a certain fullness of the lips indicates the generous giver and the *bon vivant*. The hazel eyes have a kindly, humorous gleam beneath arched brows. The complexion is florid ; the chin, with a cleft in it, is not too salient ; there is a curious dent in the forehead. His reconciliation with his great rival, Sir Joshua Reynolds, is related touchingly by Lord Ronald Leveson-Gower. As he lay on his death-bed, with his hand clasped in the other's, he murmured :

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"We are all going to Heaven and Vandyke is of the company."

To this small house also came Dick Sheridan, then an impetuous youth of twenty, dubbed at Harrow an "impenetrable dunce". You may be sure that both he and his brother made love to Eliza, when Mrs. Linley was busy elsewhere. Here too Walter Long, Elizabeth's elderly suitor, sought the maid's hand in marriage. Although some of the children were absent at school, there must have been times when the family sat down thirteen to table with one maid to wait on them. There are only eight rooms in this "convenient" house.

I lingered in it as long as I could with propriety. In the best bedroom, next the drawing-room, some of the Linley children were born. The original pine panelling, covered with paint, is in a remarkable state of preservation.

I had been looking at the prints of Gainsborough's portraits of William, Mary, Elizabeth, Thomas, and the portrait of Mrs. Linley, ascribed to Ozias Humphry, another friend of the family, so I was able to re-people these rooms with what photographers term sharp definition. When, later on, Gainsborough was told that his portraits of Foote and Garrick were not considered good likenesses, he said: "Rot them for a couple of rogues; they have everybody's faces but their own." He was going to the play in Bath when he heard from the gentleman with him that a lady, a stranger to him, was in grievous distress for want of money. This so upset Gainsborough that he abandoned going to the play, went home, and sent off instantly a handsome grant-in-aid.

After leaving the Linley house I wandered across

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Pierrepoint Street and down the South Parade till I came to what is left of the stone steps leading to the ferry used before the bridge was built. Elizabeth came here to keep tryst with her "Horatio" (Sheridan) in a grotto at the side of the first North Parade house, where they met after they had eloped together to France.

By this time I was eager to find the spot where Bob Acres did not fight his duel with Captain Absolute. It is uncertain whether or not *The Rivals* was written in Bath, but Dick's father, Thomas, lived in Kingsmead Street. The dramatist fought two duels with the fire-eating Captain Matthews, one in a room in London by candle-light, and the second on King's Down, near Bath, where both men stabbed at each other with broken swords. Sheridan, desperately wounded, was carried to the White Hart Hotel, pulled down to make room for the Grand Pump Room Hotel ; and although this second duel infuriated Thomas Sheridan, it led indirectly to the second marriage, inasmuch as Eliza's tender heart was lacerated by the sufferings endured by "Horatio". Thus the lovely nightingale warbled :

*Can true affection cease to fear ?
Poor is the joy not worth a tear :
Did passion ever know content ?
How weak the rapture words can paint :
Then let my sighs and tears but prove
The winds and waves that waft to love.*

Obviously Thomas Linley had commended a study of Pope to his eldest daughter.

Near Rosewell House (once Londonderry, a gorgeous specimen of pre-Wood architecture disparaged by John Wood), I saw a group of young women, some engaged in baby-worship, others absorbed in Yo-yo. I asked

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an intelligent-looking girl, if she could point out Sheridan's house. "Sheridan," she repeated, "I don't think I've ever heard the name. I live here, but I'm sure he doesn't." Without comment I thanked her and passed on, but it occurred to me that bright children, educated in Bath, ought to know more than they do about illustrious Bathonians. Our children are well educated, but few indeed care tuppence about the past.

The meadow where the famous duel might have taken place is covered with mean houses. To console myself I went over Rosewell House, now a tenement. Here Dr. Joseph Butler, Bishop of Durham, lived and died. I talked to half a dozen of the lodgers; I gleaned nothing of interest. The fine oak staircase is all that is left of a once magnificent interior. As I wandered from room to room and peered into the shops, now part of the ground floor, I wondered what evil spirit possessed Bath landlords when they suffered such stately houses as this and Ralph Allen's to be so maltreated. How came it to pass that a mixed grill of *jazz* architecture was allowed to be built on such historic ground as that facing the obelisk in Orange Grove? Why was Nassau House and other fine houses pulled down to make room for this pretentious alien? I asked this question of a Bathonian, who replied: "At that time our city was too full of the unburied dead."

I ended my bitter-sweet pilgrimage by obtaining permission to inspect Ralph Allen's town house, built by John Wood, a masterpiece of classic architecture. It surprised me to find the rooms so small, but Mr. Meehan explains this, inasmuch as Allen kept here a small army of clerks employed on the cross-posts business. It is now shut in and shorn of its two

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wings. Surely it might have been preserved as we see it in Lansdown's drawing.

On this same afternoon I stared more critically at the large painted bust of Garrick, surmounting the entrance to the Garrick's Head Hotel, which, with the present Theatre Royal, was Nash's palace, although he died in the much smaller house to the north of the theatre. From the portrait of Garrick by Reynolds hanging in the Garrick Club I should not have identified it; and yet it bears a startling likeness to the late Charles Wyndham as he looked when he played Garrick.

§ v

ALBAN BUTLER, not the prince of the Church who died in Rosewell House, wrote his *Lives of the Saints* about the time when gay sinners peacocked about our Parades. Miss Sitwell describes these sinners with a wealth of corroborative detail not bestowed upon them by Monsieur Barbeau, Mr. Peach, and other chroniclers. She presents a list, long as Wimpole Street, of the names of the fabrics then fashionable. I mention a few: baguzees, chelloes, mamoodies, niccanees, somguzzes and cattanees——! Has Chanel ever heard of these? Miss Sitwell's two chapters upon Bath Society and the Games of Hazard are a robust achievement. In another chapter she makes one understand the attitude of John Wesley, Whitfield and Selina, Countess of Huntingdon, towards these revellers, nit-wits, gamesters and spendthrifts. The "unco guids" menaced the autocracy of the Beau, but doggerel quoted by Miss Sitwell indicates that Nash had the best of a hot encounter. Enterprising booksellers,

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after Wesley's first sermon in the presence of four thousand people, offered for sale tracts for the time.

*The books were opened t'other day,
At all the shops, for Church and Play.
The Church got six, Hoyle sixty-seven.
How great the odds of Hell to Heaven.*

Nevertheless John Wesley's first sermon in Bath had much to do with the Gaming Act of 1739, which made illegal Bassett, Faro, and Hazard, and constrained the Beau to invent new games such as Roly-poly (I quote Miss Sitwell), Bragg, and E.O., a sort of roulette. The chapter on Society is an epitome of what Smollett, Fielding, Fanny Burney and the diarists dealt with here and there as occasion served. Miss Sitwell's presentment of it is no waspish indictment, but has the force of a huge tidal wave following wavelets. And the reader of her sprightly pages must marvel not at the wickedness but at the appalling dullness of lives, redeemed it is true by flashes of ill-natured wit, but barren of everything which makes life worth the living.

Alban Butler has much to say about St. Alphege, who built himself a cell in Bath Abbey, became Abbot, was ordained Bishop of Winchester, and was slain by the Danes in 1012.

Those Danes——!

Near Bideford in Devon is a railed-in spot known to this day as "Bloody Corner", where Alfred the Great slaughtered the pirates and restored peace to Wessex, but long after his death in 901 they went on ravaging East Anglia. St. Alphege, however, put the fear of God into them, as follows:

"After his murder an old rotten stake was driven into his body, and those who drave it said that if on the morrow the

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stake was green and bore leaves they would believe ; where-upon the stake flourished and the drivers thereof repented, as they said they would, and the body, being buried in St. Paul's Church, in London, worked miracles. . . ."

A miracle, or what was reputed to be such at the time, saved the faith of my ancestress, Mary Honywood, of Mark's Hall, in Essex, who lived to see more than a hundred and fifty of her descendants, and was one of many Elizabethans profoundly distressed by John Fox's *Book of Martyrs*. She became obsessed by the conviction that she, an exemplary matron, was foredoomed to suffer the torments of the damned. In answer to a friend who protested against this conviction, she picked up a Venetian glass, exclaiming : " I am as sure of my damnation as I am that this glass will break when I hurl it to the ground." She hurled the glass to the floor of the room, and—*mirabile dictu* !—the glass was not broken. This glass, handsomely mounted in silver-gilt, is in the possession of Mr. Hall-Dare, of Newtonbarry House, in the county of Wexford, Ireland. The portrait of Mary Honywood hangs in his hall. My paternal grandmother was also a Mary Honywood, of Mark's Hall.

Upon the 23rd of April St. George of England was born, and in January's chapter I said regretfully that reliable information about the slayer of the dragon was penuriously scanty. Better so, perhaps. As our patron saint he engages the more actively our powers of imagination. Butler speaks of him as " The Great Martyr ". He was honoured by all Christendom—and we know nothing authentic about him. On his feast-day blue coats were worn by men of fashion.

*About St. George when blue is worn,
The blue hare bells the fields adorn.*

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The First Gentleman of Europe, born in August, changed the annual celebration of his birthday to St. George's Day, when bells were pealed all over the kingdom. When did it cease to be a public holiday?

The swallow is an April bird. Why do our sparrows wage merciless war on them? Because, so the gaffers affirm, they covet the migrants' nests. Sparrows lay eggs in swallows' nests, and, now and again, the swallows plaster up the entrance to these nests, thereby killing the young sparrows. In Berkshire they are still regarded as God Almighty's birds. Bewick, writing more than a hundred and thirty years ago, says that at Camerton Hall, near Bath, a pair of swallows built their nest on the upper part of the frame of an old picture over the chimney, coming through a broken pane in the window of the room. They came three years successively, and in all probability would have continued to do so if the room had not been put into repair, which prevented access to it.

Persons killing a swallow will, within the year, break a bone or meet with some dreadful misfortune. The birds were sacred to the household gods of the Romans. Magical stones were reputed to be found in their nests, although they have no thieving propensities like jackdaws. It is accounted fortunate to see the first swallow when seated and to be walking when we first hear the cuckoo. If a swallow flies beneath the udder of a cow, her milk is "*arondalé*" and not fit to swallow. Izaak Walton speaks of Italians angling for swallows, presumably to eat them. Let us hope that St. Michael disapproved of this fishing.

Our sparrows are impudently tame. Of course we feed them, because it is so amusing to watch the tiny gluttons. They drive away birds larger than them-

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selves, but share our breadcrumbs with the linnets and chaffinches. Still I have not as yet coaxed one to feed out of my hand.

§ VI

WITH time and patience one can collect scraps of folk-lore which are in danger of being forgotten. But I am defeated in the attempt to determine *when* certain time-honoured customs withered and decayed. In what parish of England was "heaving" last practised? Easter Monday and Tuesday were heaving-days. Monday was the men's day. On Tuesday jolly matrons pursued the male, hoisted him, kissed him, and demanded sixpence for "leave and license" to depart in peace. Hone suggests that this custom had symbolical reference to the Resurrection; and he goes on to remark rather pompously that "if the children of ignorant persons be properly taught, they will perceive in adult years the gross follies of their parentage. . . ." But in Hone's day, brave indeed was the child who questioned the authority of his parents. It is far more likely that the former feast days and holidays were suppressed by the employers of labour, the Gradgrinds of mid-Victorian times. And now such employers of labour as Mr. Henry Ford are advocating, and wisely, lesser hours of work, lesser days of unremitting toil. *On revient!* We may live to see increased doles and more junketings under the up-to-date slogan: Give the People bread and circuses. The Fathers of the Church well knew that honest merry-making kept the unemployed out of mischief.

Easter eggs remain as popular as ever, and much more expensive. In Catholic countries eggs were hard-

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boiled, blessed, and painted with divers colours. Those presented to Royal Households were gilded. Brand gives the form of benediction: "Bless, O Lord, we beseech Thee, this Thy creature of eggs, that it may become a wholesome sustenance to Thy faithful servants, eating it in thankfulness to Thee on account of the Resurrection of Our Lord." A Gaul supposes that the practice of decorating Easter eggs arose from the joy which was occasioned by the fasters returning to their favourite food after forty days' abstinence.

The reason given for painting Easter eggs red I found in *The Gourmets Almanach*, another book to be commended, full of excellent recipes and well seasoned with spicy table talk. Don Jacinthe Verdaguer, a famous Catalan poet, gives the following explanation:

"In returning to-day from the services of the Holy Sepulchre, I noticed in all the tents where victuals were sold that they also had for sale eggs dyed red. I asked the reason for the colour and this is what they said:

"Once upon a time the Jews gave their children a lot of eggs to throw at Christ as He passed by. Our Lord passed, and the children, as they were about to throw the eggs, noticed that they had turned blood red. Frightened by this miracle, the children ran back to their parents with the eggs. And since then it has been the custom in Italy and elsewhere to sell red-coloured eggs at Easter.' "

§ VII

ST. MARK'S DAY falls upon April the 25th. He was the patron saint of cobblers.

*On St. Mark's Eve, at twelve o'clock,
The fair maid will watch her smock,
To find her husband in the dark,
By praying unto good St. Mark.*

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In Yorkshire it was "customary for the common people to sit and watch in the church porch on St. Mark's Eve from eleven at night till one in the morning. The third year (for this must be done thrice) they are supposed to see the ghosts of those who are to die the next year pass into the church." Thirty years ago I came across a similar legend in Brittany dealing with the Ankou, but the note-book in which I jotted down the details mysteriously vanished, stolen, so I think, by some *Bretonne bretonnante* who wished to burke my curiosities. "Church watching", as a custom, became obsolete more than a hundred years ago in England. It must have provoked practical joking on the part of sceptical village wags. Benn Barr of Helpstone, a sturdy rogue, made a dishonest living (so Hone tells us) as a Church Watcher, acting as proxy for those who were too timid and credulous to keep such vigils. He prophesied nothing but good to those who paid him in silver instead of pence.

St. Catharine of Siena (not to be confounded with the saint of the wheel) was born on the last day of April. At six years of age she knew the lives of the holy fathers by revelation, practised abstinence, and shut herself up with other children in a room where they whipped themselves! A precocious saint. I find no mention of her in Mrs. Jameson's *Sacred and Legendary Art*, but there is an illuminating (and illuminated) chapter about St. Catharine of Alexandria. It was she of Siena who was offered two crowns, one of pure gold and the other of thorns; she took the crown of thorns. She drew good wine out of an empty hogshead, and made white bread out of tainted flour. . . .

Belief in such miracles inspired the art of the Middle

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Ages, for which even the most sceptical should be grateful. But it accomplished far more than this—raising the ideal of saintly womanhood throughout Christendom ; it informed the chivalry of the knights ; it imposed the highest standard of conduct upon women and children. When faith in the saints and martyrs was ridiculed at the court of Louis XV the abandoning of restraint and decency became obvious to the meanest understanding. Now, to-day, in this age of liberty and licence the pendulum has begun to swing back in the direction of a sane restraint and self- (not Church-) imposed discipline. Let credit be given to Mr. J. D. Beresford for indicating this paradoxically progressive and retrogressive movement in his too short recent novel, entitled *The Next Generation*. I have a bone to pick with him, because (for reasons not, I make sure, his own) he has compressed into forty thousand words subject-matter which cannot be so boiled down. Anyway, Mr. Beresford, so far as I know, is the first to indicate the revulsion of our boys and girls against still youthful parents who have made the hog-pen their spiritual home. He pitch-forks a young man and a girl fresh from school into a week-end party of pigs in clover ; he presents their reactions and actions ; and, short though the novel is, it is to me convincing. The next generation *will* rise above the pornocracies of this. Hats off to Mr. Beresford !

Towards the end of April, unless she be whimsically belated in her duties, the wayfarer can beguile his leisure by studying maps of the West Country. On the first of May he can set out in quest of a maypole. Meanwhile he is going to squander time and money if he fails to stock memory's larder with provaunt.

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Let him do for his mind what Dugald Dalgetty did for his body. He might read, for instance, Walter Raymond's *Short History of Somerset*, not to mention half a dozen other similar books which serve to recall England as it was. In our London museums and galleries, accomplished guides enlighten ignorance. I listened to one the other day, who must have understudied the Autocrat of the Breakfast-table. He held forth upon the Primitives and his small audience gave him undivided attention. Very soon, probably, we shall have what we have already in Bath, gentlemen (or ladies) who will take charge of ignorance and transmute its lead into silver if not gold by personally conducting parties of tourists. That is another increasing demand which must be satisfied.

I mentioned Raymond's book, because in May I propose to visit Wells, before the tide of summer travel sets Westward Ho! In May and June this pastoral country is at its best.

§ VIII

WITH April passes the oyster season. Whoever eats oysters on St. James's Day will never lack money. It is unfortunate that the saint's day is the 25th of July.

*That man had sure a palate covered o'er
With brass or steel that on the rocky shore
First broke the oozy oyster's pearly coat
And risked the living morsel down his throat.*

King John said much the same in prose. Although oysters were eaten throughout the year till a close season was ordained by a Victorian Act of Parliament, a writer so far back as 1599 observes that it is whole-

April

some to eat them in months that have not an R in their name. A Devon squire, who owned an oyster bed, salved his gastronomical conscience by spelling August—Orgust.

Your true connoisseur licks the oyster off his shell, disdaining adjuncts. Casanova could eat prodigious quantities. So, probably, could the Walrus and the Carpenter.

*"A loaf of bread", the Walrus said,
"Is what we chiefly need,
Pepper and vinegar besides
Are very good indeed.
Now, if you're ready, oysters dear,
We can begin to feed."*

§ IX

A KIND friend sent me this morning a stained and faded clipping from what I take to be a magazine of long ago. It throws light upon a quaint custom of our Bath chairmen. I have just asked one of the few survivals if he had ever heard of it. He replied curtly: "Never." It is headed:

*A chairman late's a chairman dead,
And to his grave by chairmen sped.
They wake him, as they march him through
The streets of Bath to public view.*

I copy the clipping *verbatim*:

"Sir,—I beg leave to transmit for your use the following attempt at description of an old and singular custom, performed by the chairman of this my native city. . . . Its origin I have not been able to trace, but its authenticity you may rely on, as it is too often seen by your Bath readers to be forgotten. I have also accompanied it with the above imperfect sketch, as a further illustration of their manner of

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burying the 'dead', *alias*, exposing a drunkard of their fraternity. The following is the manner in which the 'obsequies' to the intoxicated are performed.

"If a chairman, known to have been 'dead' drunk over night, does not appear on his station before ten o'clock on the succeeding morning, the 'undertaker', *Anglice*, his partner, proceeds, with such a number of attendants as will suffice for the ceremony, to the house of the *late* unfortunate. If he is found in bed, as is usually the case, from the effects of his sacrifice to the 'jolly God', they pull him out of his nest, hardly permitting him to dress, and place him on the bier—a chairman's 'horse' (stretcher)—and throwing a coat over him, which they designate a 'pall', they perambulate the circuit of his station in the following order:—

"1. The sexton—a man tolling a small hand-bell.

"2. Two mutes—each with a black stocking on a stick.

"3. The torch-bearer—a man carrying a lighted lantern.

"4. The corpse 'borne on the hearse', carried by two chairmen, covered with the aforesaid pall.

"The procession is closed by the mourners following after, two and two, as many joining as choose, from the station to which the drunkard belongs.

"After exposing him in this manner to the gaze of the admiring crowd that throng about, they proceed to the public-house he has been in the habit of using, where his 'wake' is celebrated in joviality and mirth, with a gallon of ale at his expense. It often happens that each will contribute a trifle towards a further prolongation of the carousal, to entrap others into the same deadly snare; and the day is spent in baiting for the chances of the next morning, as none are exempt who are not at their post before the prescribed hour."

The illustration indicates, from the costumes of the chairman, that this extract was published about one hundred years ago.

All writers about Bath are agreed that the chairmen were an impudent, bullying, hectoring set of toss-pots. The few, still to be seen outside the Pump Room, appear to be exemplary citizens and, to a man, almost disappointingly sober.

•

May

May

§ I

MAY can be as capricious as April. This year (1932) she misbehaved herself shockingly, although the philosophic mind should be proof against shocks. Still one expects much of May, possibly too much.

On the third of the month, this year, the oak began to leaf, whereas the more cautious ash burgeoned a fortnight later.

*If the ash be before the oak
Then the land will have a soak.
If the oak be before the ash
Then the land will be good and nash.*

“Nash” is Zoomerzet for dry.

*Marry in May
And you'll rue the day
And wed povertaie.*

Of these two saws, the first is the more reliable, although thousands of people throughout the kingdom believe in the ill-luck attendant upon May marriages. The omniscient Brand tells us that the superstition came from the ancients.

How many of the younger generation associate May-fair, that sacrosanct part of London, with the May fair held not so long ago near Piccadilly? Here the

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pretty milk-maids danced and collected their fees from customers ; here—so a certain Mr. Carter writes to his friend Sylvanus Urban—were “ mountebanks, fire-eaters, ass-racing, sausage-tables, dice-tables, up-and-downs, merry-go-rounds, bull-baiting, grinning for a hat, running for a shift, hasty pudding eaters, eel-divers, and an infinite variety of pastimes—including a ducking-pond.”

This merry-making became a festival of misrule and disorder.

May-Day dancing went on in the country when I was a boy. Last year, here in Bath, I encountered four children going a-maying, figged out with ribands and looking, so I thought, pathetically forlorn. They had collected five-pence——! I engaged them in talk. Of May-Day customs they knew nothing, but it appeared that they had wandered about Widcombe for several hours hoping to collect half a crown. A grant-in-aid despatched them home. They carried no May dolls, as was the habit of their grandmothers.

May Songs used to be sung on May Eve, which was termed in Lancashire “ Mischief-night ”. Young men and girls played tricks on each other, by leaving shrubs and flowers at their respective doors. A thorn implied scorn, a bramble indicated vagabondage, an alder, a scold. The songs were supposed to be charms to drive away cold winter. Washington Irving gives a delightful account of a May-Day pageant near Chester.

These junketings were encouraged because they brought grist to the players and dancers, all of whom through the year were woefully underpaid. The money so collected was spent upon the feast that followed ; what followed the feast may be left to the imagination. A Laodicean clergy winked at disorder.

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Then, about a hundred years ago, when the *Tracts for the Times* revitalized our Church, the squires and parsons attempted, too late perhaps, to rule misrule. Long before the Reformation the priests in remote country villages were nearly as ignorant as their parishioners. At the conference of Modern Churchmen held a few days ago at Bristol, Canon Watson related a story of the fifteenth century when Bishop Hooper visited his diocese of Gloucester and found that of the 311 priests he examined, 171 could not say the Lord's Prayer, and 27 did not know who was the author of that prayer. Two said that the prayer was so called because the Lord King had ordered the people to use it. At this same conference Dr. Coulton of Cambridge observed that Oxford claimed Alfred as her founder, whereupon, in retaliation, Cambridge claimed Arthur or a still earlier mythical king, Cantaber. Thus the earliest of all inter-university contests was a lying match——!

Those canting humbugs, the Puritans, abolished maypoles. The Merry Monarch restored them with great pomp and rejoicing. The Strand pole, 134 feet high, made of cedar, was erected in 1661 and taken down (because it decayed) in 1771. Near this maypole Mr. Robert Percival, a young "blood" of the period, was found dead with a deep wound under his left breast; his sword, drawn and bloody, lay beside him. He was nineteen years of age and had fought as many duels as he had lived years. Beau Fielding was suspected of this crime.

May Day was also Chimney-sweepers' Day. Elia speaks of these "dim specks—poor blots—innocent blacknesses". He continues: "If thou meetest one of these small gentry in thy early rambles, it is good to

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give him a penny. It is better to give him two-pence." He describes what happened to a lost chimney-sweeper who was found asleep in a ducal bed at Arundel Castle :

' The little creature, having somehow confounded his passage among the intricacies of those lordly chimneys, by some unknown aperture had alighted upon this magnificent chamber ; and, tired with his tedious explorations, was unable to resist the delicious invitation to repose, which he saw there exhibited ; so creeping between the sheets very quietly, laid his black head upon the pillow, and slept like a young Howard.'

§ II

MAY was rightly considered to be a trying month for invalids. " If he can climb over May hill, he'll do." A stock of brooms must be laid in before May Day, as it would be unlucky to make any at that time. In Ireland the first milking is to this day poured on the ground to propitiate the little people. In Scotland it is unlucky to dig peat on the third of the month, or to take stock of cattle or sheep. If a child is born on Whit-Sunday it will die an unnatural death unless named after some saint as a protector. You mustn't pare your nails on Whit-Monday. May kittens used to be killed as useless. In Wilts and Dorset the gammers firmly believed that May kittens, if allowed to live, would catch no mice, but bring into the house snakes and slow-worms.

In Ireland, within the past few years, I was assured by a competent authority that the priests fostered these superstitions. Our landlord told me the following story as a personal experience. He had asked one of his tenants to vote for him which the man solemnly

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pledged himself to do. The village priest ordered him to vote for another. Mickey found himself between Church and State, inasmuch as the priest threatened to turn him into a rat if he voted for his landlord. Upon the morning of the election, Mickey's wife urged him to vote for the priest's man. "I will not," said Mickey stoutly. "Then ye'll be turned into a rat, an' what use 'll a rat be to me." Mickey declared his intention of keeping his word, but as he reached the door of his cabin, he turned. "Biddy, dear," said he, "it's voting I'll be in an hour; see to it that ye lock up the cat."

A ghillie on the River Blackwater told me that he believed in the Little People. I believe myself in Poltergeist.

§ III

LET us adventure to Wells. Here, most fortunately, King Ina built the Church of St. Andrew for priests who were not monks. When the ruthless and rapacious monster, Henry Tudor, dismantled Glastonbury, Wells escaped. The Cathedral Church has twin towers above the western front somewhat similar to the twin towers of Chichester. A Sussex magnate promised to build a tower on the Chichester Cathedral if his wife were safely delivered of her child. The good lady presented her lord with twins; and he, pious man, built two towers instead of one. There is no such legend at Wells.

Approaching Wells from Bath you drive through the loveliest pastoral country in the kingdom. Milton must have had in mind some such landscape when he wrote *L'Allegro*. The clouds "in thousand liveries

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dight" hang upon the hoar hills of Mendip; the meadows are pied with daisies; the high woods, the hedgerows, the hillocks green, are as they were when the poet lived at Hoxton. Whenever I approach Wells, I think of Chartres so enthrallingly described by Henry Adams in his *Mont St. Michel and Chartres*. Both cathedrals are epitomes of Gothic architecture; both are embellished with hundreds of carved figures, both too can be seen from afar. But Chartres is hemmed in with buildings; Wells is unique, because the Cathedral Church, the Chapter House, the Bishop's Palace, the Green, and the incomparable Vicars' Close form an unsurpassed whole. The town is an adjunct. And yet the town, till quite recently, remained mediæval. It is said that part of the wall on the west side of the Green was pulled down, so as to give the townspeople a glimpse of the Chapter House. The Dean was asked: "Do you object, Mr. Dean, to our being able to see the Chapter House from the town?" To this the Dean riposted slyly: "No, no; but, if you will pardon my saying so, the Chapter House cannot be expected to derive quite the same satisfaction from seeing you."

Away to the westward shimmers Severn's silver sea. To the south lies Glastonbury which shall be visited in June. A full week could be spent in Wells devoted to the Cathedral Church and the Precincts. All the memories of a rich past are here enshrined. What is new in the town serves as a foil to what is old, as it does in Avignon, where the palace dominates everything.

The pilgrim might begin with St. Andrew's Wells, which supply the palace moat with water, and gave the town its name. If these are not holy wells, where

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can you find them? King Ina may have drunk a glass of this fair water, before he laid the foundation-stone of his Saxon church; and perhaps the naiads taught the swāns to ring a bell when they are hungry——!

Before entering the buildings, try to find a spot where the Precincts can be seen panoramically. There is a spot on higher ground to the south-east of the springs. With a little manœuvring you can eliminate everything except the palace, the church, and the Chapter House. Incidentally, you can put back the clock some seven hundred years and achieve atmosphere. But to do this you should be alone. Then the spell may work. This is Merlin's country.

The wonder of Wells is its age which laughs at time. St. Andrew must have given his church undivided attention. Again, the stone-masons employed were honest craftsmen, and are still. Talk to them and you will understand that their work is regarded as a sacred obligation to strive after perfection. It is almost certain that some of them are descendants of the men who built King Ina's Saxon church. If one wonders (as I did a few pages back) what the effect of climate may be on character, one is even more perplexed in trying to compute the reactions of certain crafts upon the minds of those who devote their lives to them. Throughout Dorset and Somerset, and wherever stone is quarried, you will find almost imperishable monuments of work splendidly done. So far as stone-masons are concerned, where son succeeds father down the endless avenue of years, there must be the inherited instinct to lay the stones well and truly, and also the inherited sense of the permanency of such work. What a spur to supreme endeavour this must

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be ! It has been affirmed that nearly all stone-masons are exceptionally honest men.

Having captured the view from the south-east, which I take to be the best, the pilgrim might then box the compass till he finds another angle of vision not far from the spot where the wall was broken down west of the Green ; but here the hoot of a car is likely to break the spell. The first point of view includes the small mere below the springs, and you get the reflections of the cathedral, *l'église lointaine*. . . . Silence encompasses the vision splendid, silence save for the flutings of the warblers in May, a choir invisible.

If the spell works, you can now summon up the good Bishop Jocelin, who has been called the "maker of Wells". During thirty-six years this prelate laboured indefatigably till he died in 1242. Professor Freeman sums up what Jocelin accomplished :

"By the end of the thirteenth century we may look upon the church of Wells as at last finished. It still lacked much of that perfection of outline which now belongs to it, and which the next age was finally to give to it. Many among that matchless group of surrounding buildings which give Wells its chief charm had not yet arisen. . . . The Lady Chapel had not yet been reared. . . . The cloister was still of wood. The palace was still undefended by wall or moat. The Vicars' Close and its bridge had not yet been dreamed of . . ."

§ IV

THE Bishop's Palace is not a palace, but an exciting chapter in domestic architecture. What was palatial, the Great Hall, is now a ruin. To compare this epitome of the centuries with Blenheim or Longleat is a bid for disappointment. When you cross the drawbridge—which no longer is drawn—and pass

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through the gateway, you will see an irregular façade, and a most irregular but fascinating collection of gables, roofs, battlements and chimneys, the whole occupying three sides of a quadrangle. In 1846 the palace was "restored" (!) Bishop Bagot, at whose order the work was so ill-done, "did", Dr. Dearmer observes, "what he could to destroy the unique character and beauty of a block of buildings without parallel anywhere". Let this prelate rest in peace—if he can. With your mind's eye, try to summon up Jocelin, Stillington, Beckington and Ralph of Shrewsbury. The Great Hall was built by Bishop Burnell. Of all these bishops my fancy lingers most beguilingly upon the outspoken, saintly Thomas Ken. St. Andrew must have looked upon him as a favourite son. There are many portraits of him. One hangs in the palace. He was short, slender, with dark, penetrating eyes overarched by eyebrows that indicate the poet. His sensitive mouth turns up humorously but kindly in a slightly derisive smile. When the See of Bath and Wells fell vacant, the Merry Monarch said: "Send for the fellow who refused poor Nell his lodging." That is how Ken became a bishop. He was never afraid of affronting the mighty. He told Macaulay's hero, William of Orange, that he was "horribly unsatisfied" with that jaundiced prince's treatment of Mary, his wife; he preached boldly against swearing in an age when all and sundry swore "prodigiously"; he went afoot when other lordly bishops rode in their coaches, and he wrote—which many of us have forgotten—that clarion hymn "Awake my soul!", possibly the best-known hymn in the English-speaking world. As a non-juror he was turned out of his see in 1691, and accepted his bludgeonings like a saint

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and a philosopher. What he had he gave to the poor. When he was dying at Longleat, he put on his shroud which he carried with him, and lay down calmly to await the end.

*Like one that draws the drapery of his couch
About him, and lies down to pleasant dreams.*

Herrick did the same.

The mention of Ken's morning hymn recalls to mind a ravine at Burrington in Somerset, a smaller edition of the Cheddar Gorge. Here Toplady, taking shelter from a storm, wrote "Rock of Ages".

Ken was on the scaffold when Monmouth was beheaded; and Sedgemoor is but a swallow's flight from Wells. After the battle horses were stabled in the nave of the church, and at that time Ken was already translated to the see. Monmouth behaved pusillanimously after his capture, but he met his death like a man and a king's son. He refused to make a speech, turned to the executioner and said: "Here are six guineas for you; pray do your business well. Do not serve me as you did my Lord Russell." Despite this warning, Ketch did his grim business ill to the horror of all who witnessed it. I like to think that the presence of Ken, who had no fear of death, fortified this unhappy prince.

Ken was the nephew of old Izaak Walton, and came under that complete angler's influence when he was a young man. Who can doubt that Walton's influence had much to do with the formation of Ken's sturdy, philosophic character. It was Ken who said that poetry was the language of men before the Fall.

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§ v

THE Cathedral Church, if you enter the nave by the western door, loses some of its original space and splendour, because the Choir and Lady Chapel are obscured by the huge arches, one inverted on the other, which had to be built after the central tower was raised in 1321. The general effect is that of a St. Andrew's cross. Were it not for this somewhat clumsily imposed addition, the interior of the church would present a magnificent vista from west to extreme east.

I commend to the pilgrim three books dealing with the Church and its Precincts: Dr. Percy Dearmer's brief *History of the Cathedral and See*, Professor Freeman's larger volume, and Canon Church's *Chapters*. A *magnum opus* has yet to be written; and it will take a lifetime to write it.

In the cloisters hangs the mural tablet erected to the memory of Thomas Linley, his daughter, Elizabeth Sheridan, and the latter's baby. This tablet was removed, with many others, from the nave. Later on a descendant of Sheridan wished to find the exact spot in the church where Elizabeth was buried. *Nobody knew*. Finally, measurements were taken of the distance between the clamps of the tablet in the cloisters, and then a careful survey of the inner walls of the church disclosed corresponding holes. Not far away the grave was found.

Within the cloisters, in the quadrangle of turf, is a charming little tomb with the inscription nearly effaced, a pathetic monument to a child who died long ago. She must, I feel, have been a darling; and her tomb to me is even more interesting and beguiling than that of St. William Bytton in the South Choir Aisle, where

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persons suffering from toothache were miraculously cured. No thrice-accursed tripper has defaced this tiny shrine by carving his initials upon it. The alabaster effigies in the church are covered with profane scribbings, and it is consoling to reflect that this hideous sacrilege is no longer permitted. Trippers ought to be allowed to register their names in public lavatories only.

Vicars' Close, the most charming *cul-de-sac* in the world, inspired in me the determination to write a novel about it. Bishop Ralph had no fitting habitation for his vicars' choral, or singing men, forty in number. Accordingly he built this sanctuary. You come upon it suddenly. You pass an ancient gateway, after leaving the Green, noting the fairy bridge connecting the Chapter House with the Gate House. You peer delightedly up a gentle slope flanked with small houses, and you see at the end of this by-street an ancient chapel. Each miniature house has its carefully tended garden. This by-street is the more captivating, because (presumably) both eye and mind have been concentrated on what is overwhelmingly too great to "take in". Sight-seeing is fatiguing unless it be accomplished leisurely. An American friend observed: "Gosh! my first squint at Westminster Abbey blinded me."

Vicars' Close is not under the jurisdiction of Dean and Chapter. One dean, so the gossips have it, locked the door leading from the Chapter House to the bridge which is still a passage to the Close. Whereupon the Close bolted the door on their side with the remark: "Mr. Dean has locked us out, and we have bolted him in."

I think of this *cul-de-sac* as Levites' Row. Levites still live there. After the Reformation the celibate

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singing men took unto themselves wives ; and the houses, little more than sleeping-chambers, were reconstructed inside. The ancient refectory is now a museum rich in charters, but it remains as it was in pre-Elizabethan times. A few theological students board and lodge with the collegians. Dogs and women were once forbidden to pass through the gateway. It seems too harsh a rule that celibates were denied the companionship of dogs.

The moat, surrounding the palace, is another surprise, if you pass to it through the Bishop's Door of the cloisters. Swans and wild duck live here amicably, which is strange, because swans, as a rule, drive away wild fowl. Possibly St. Andrew has something to say about it. Mr. Morton asserts that the ducks, like the swans, ring the bell for food. I have not yet seen them doing it.

Lightfoot's famous clock, made in 1325, showing the phases of the moon and the position of the planets, with four revolving horsemen, and a figure, Jack Blandiver, who strikes the quarter of each hour with his heels, is fully described in a monograph by Mr. Howgrave-Graham. I now watch this mediæval comedietta with an eye upon the agape mouths of the visitors and an ear quickened to catch their remarks. A "boy" whispered to his lady friend: "You can't say *this* isn't a bit of orlrite?" She nodded, unable to speak because her mouth was full of chocolate. Obviously she had regretted not going to Weston-super-Mare. But I had a reassuring talk with the dean's verger after this incident. He admitted that Jack Blandiver was a "draw", but he spoke positively of the increasing interest and intelligence of the "chariabanging" proletariat. On this occasion I overheard another

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remark as the knights careered past each other. "Why", asked a stout gentleman, "does one fellow knock another off his horse? What does it mean?"

Well, what does it mean?

Perhaps the overthrow of the passing moment.

Again why does Jack kick his bell with heels instead of toes? Is this again symbolical of contempt for the flight of Time?

On the west side of the moat you will find a bowling-green. In Wells, as in Bath, bowls is a popular pastime. I asked a well-seasoned bowler how long it took to attain proficiency. He gave me to understand that a man might reasonably expect to send down a "good wood" after five and twenty years of assiduous practice.

I leave Wells regretfully, sensible that I have left unsaid so much that has been well said by others. The effigies on the western front are a sermon in stone, the work of one mind although of many hands. Professor Cockerall has written an *Iconography*, but Dr. Dearmer affirms that his identification of the figures (there were three hundred and fifty of them) is arbitrary. Some are nine feet high; the others are life-size. Nobody will dispute Dr. Dearmer's declaration that this is the finest collection of mediæval statuary to be found in England.

Au revoir, Wells.

§ VI

LAST year we were inordinately proud of our tulips; this year, for reasons best known to themselves, our Clara Butts had a hang-dog air distressing to behold. Tulip-mania has never assailed

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me, but I regard the flowers with a more tender affection since I learned that, in Devon, the pixies cradle their babies in the cups. A woman, so the legend runs, rising early to bathe her face in May dew, espied the babes in the flowers, and forthwith planted more bulbs and established a kindergarden of pixies. To reward her, the fairies caused the tulips to wear brighter colours than heretofore, *and made them smell sweet*. Then the woman died, and another, who took her place, uprooted the tulips. Lo! a miracle! Tulips bloomed gorgeously upon the humble grave of her who had loved them. Then rude feet trampled them down. The fairies were so angry that they took from all tulips their perfume.

There is a similar fairy tale about the pansy, which West Country children used to call *Cuddle me* and *Kiss me quick*. The pansies possessed a scent so ravishing that everybody picked them, and they realized that they were in danger of extermination. Accordingly, they prayed to God to take away their perfume, which He did.

Pansies do well with us. But, in our woodland garden, the lovely North American Wood-lily refuses to make herself at home. However, Solomon's Seal runs riot, and, very slowly, the lilies of the valley are shyly practising the multiplication table. We declared war to the knife against wild garlic. But knifing is a waste of time. This offensive little plant, whose leaves are so impudently like those of the lily of the valley must be buried alive. We covered one ever-increasing patch with soil eighteen inches deep. Here for two seasons *Bleeding-heart* flourished till it was attacked by pernicious anæmia. This is at once the joy and the misery of woodland gardening. When

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the leaves are thick overhead, plants that love breezes and sunshine pine away. Then one turns desperately to books and catalogues. But—this is what is so exasperating—flowering plants guaranteed to bloom in quiet glades often refuse to do so. Something upsets them. There is no rule of thumb. Now we no longer struggle against invisible odds; we remove the recalcitrants, and replace them with others who show greater appreciation of our hospitality. To get colour into a woodland garden after April exacts the maximum of patience and a particular knowledge of soils. The lime in our soil has, as I have already observed, made the successful growing of rhododendrons and azaleas impossible. Innumerable tiny springs percolate through the tons of peat which we put in so optimistically. We have eight fine specimens of rhododendrons in huge tubs, and these, when they need it, are watered with rain-water——!

The spell of the garden establishes itself uncannily. Often it rejuvenates men like myself late in life. Hunting-men become enthusiastic gardeners, when they have to abandon the saddle, because the love of the chase remains. I have killed slugs with ardour; I hunt the cover-seeking snail and the field-mouse who nibbles our borders; I pursue wasps till I run them to earth, where a small chunk of cyanide of potassium puts an end to their activities. Retired sailors, old wolves of the sea, love their gardens. In their impassioned culture of tender plants old maids gratify maternal instincts. Any good mother, after her children have grown up, has the makings of a gardener

May

§ VII

WE have no nightingales in our garden, a rankling grievance. Why have they deserted us? They nested here a few years ago. Are we lineally descended from Lucullus, who made a *pâté* of their tongues? There must be a reason for this boycott. Other warblers are numerous. *When the eels be in, the nightingale comes.* Have the eels forsaken our ponds? In Spain there is a belief that a nightingale sang to Christ when he hung upon the Cross; but the robin, according to our legend, attempted to pull out the nails, and stained his breast, which remained red for ever after.

Another strange disappearance, which distresses us, is that of the common Red Admiral butterfly and also the peacock. We have seen only one fritillary since we came here. In the Ampfield woods, near Hursley, when I was a boy, fritillaries were common as the butterfly-hunters. Now, even in the New Forest, they are becoming scarcer year by year. Where have they gone? I have seen thousands of Red Admirals upon one bed of Michaelmas daisies. In August our *buddleias* will attract a few. The curious fact is that nightingales are now protected by law, and few boys carry butterfly-nets. Nevertheless and notwithstanding these ministers to ear and eye are absentees. I have a notion that nightingales abhor the noise of motor-traffic.

§ VIII

ST. DUNSTAN'S DAY comes in this month. Born at Glastonbury, expert in goldsmiths' work, he was making a chalice when the devil appeared and

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was held by the nose with red-hot tongs. Alban Butler records that the fiend roared and cried till the night was far spent. The saint will engage our attention when we make a pilgrimage to Glastonbury in June. St. Philip Neri, another May saint, could detect hidden sins by the smell of sinners, an uncomfortable gentleman, not, I should imagine, *persona grata* in any mixed company. He founded, in 1551, the religious order of the Oratory, whose disciples scourged themselves with knotted cords as they chanted the *Miserere* !

Both St. Augustine and the Venerable Bede were born in May. St. Augustine was sent to England to convert the English during the reign of Ethelbert. He was so maltreated in a Dorset village that he punished the villagers by seeing to it that the children born in the parish had tails. He is often spoken of as St. Austin. The Venerable Bede was a prodigy of learning. In the *Golden Legend* this miracle is attributed to him : " He was blind, and desiring to be led forth to preach his servant carried him to a heap of stones, to which the good father, believing himself to be preaching to a sensible congregation, delivered a noble discourse, whereunto, when he had finished his sermon, the stones answered and said : ' Amen.' " I have set this down to provoke not a sneer but a smile. Long ago in Brittany, I witnessed what appeared to be tears rolling down the cheeks of an image representing our Lady of Sorrows. They were glass beads. The *curé* of the village did not deny this, but he said artlessly : " If a mechanical device keeps faith alive in simple souls, do you object ? " In a book about the Venerable Bede which does not mention his miracles I found a credible and uplifting account of his death in 735. Upon the night he died he was dictating a translation

May

of the Gospel of St. John into Anglo-Saxon. He asked his scribe how many chapters remained. "Only one," he replied, "but you are too weak to dictate it." "No," said Bede, "take your pen and write quickly." After a time, the scribe said: "It is finished." Bede replied: "Thou hast said truly—it is finished"; and then, repeating a short prayer, he passed quietly away.

It is such stories as this which keep alive in me faith in saintliness, less rare than is generally supposed.

The Venerable Bede was sixty-two when he died, an age held to be youthful here in Bath. "Venerable" means "venerated". Dryden thus uses it about a child:

*See how the venerable infant lies
In early pomp.*

As a lover of the right word, I dislike to see such adjectives as "venerable" twisted to new uses and abuses. But protest is waste of breath. We no longer march with the times, but with the Picture Press.

Saint Monica, the mother of another St. Augustine (him of the "Confessions"), was born in May, and is held to be a model for all mothers, inasmuch as she washed away the sins and heresies of a naughty son with her tears. Indeed she wept as copiously as Niobe or Macaulay. Both she and her son appear in many famous pictures, notably the fine Van Dyk that belonged to the late Lord Methuen. She is the supreme figure in the *Carmin*e at Florence, painted by Filippo Lippi. The engraving of Murillo's *The Vision of Saint Augustine* is familiar to us. The saint, in mitre and carrying his crozier, is looking down upon a little boy, who has made a hole in the sand. The saint was writing his Discourse on the Trinity, when he saw, as he

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walked by the sea, a small boy bringing water from the sea to fill a hole. When the child was asked to explain his activities he replied : " I shall empty into this hole all the waters of the deep." " Impossible," exclaimed the saint. " Not more impossible", replied the child, " than for thee, O Augustine, to explain the mystery on which thou art now meditating."

§ IX

DURING this month, soon after we came here, I came upon a large orchard of cider apple trees in full bloom. I have never seen such quantities of blossoms. Perceiving the orchard from the crest of a hill, it looked like a field of snow set in the emerald green of the surrounding meadows. It recalled the moonflowers of California. By day, when the petals were folded, a pasture in front of our ranch-house looked arid. By moonlight it was a sheet of snow, startling to behold in a land of sunshine.

The apple orchards of Somerset in May ought to have engaged the attention of Shelley. Apples are familiar figures in poetry, but I can't recall an ode to an apple orchard in May. Mr. Skinner has a pretty tale about apples. St. Dorothea was being led to martyrdom, and a glibing lawyer, Theophilus, asked her to send him fruit from heaven. " As you wish," she answered, as she stood still and prayed. Suddenly a beautiful boy appeared bearing three great apples. The saint said to the boy : " Give these to Theophilus and tell him there are more in Paradise, where I hope to meet him." A little later her head was struck off. Theophilus embraced the faith he had despised, thereby winning martyrdom for himself, and heaven.

May

Cider is the wine of the West Country. The best is nectar.

*When apple trees blossom in March
For your barrels you needn't search;
When they blossom in April
Some you may chance to fill;
When they blossom in May
You may drink cider all day.*

The French speak of a woman who has drunk more cider than she can decorously carry as *cidralisée*.

*Cider on beer
Is very good cheer.*

I asked one of our gaffers if this mixture agreed with him, and he replied that it did. Then I confronted him with the last two lines of the quatrain.

*Beer upon cider
Makes a bad rider.*

He shook his head. He had never heard the tag; and when I told him that it came from Devon he hazarded the conviction that Somerset stomachs were stronger than Devonian. Then, slyly, he offered to experiment exhaustively—at my expense.

Of the ritual of cider-making I shall have more to say when the sweet fall of the year is upon us.

June

June

§ I

FLAMING June! All hail!

*Oh, my love's like a red, red rose
That's newly sprung in June.*

"The soft cooing of the wood-dove, the glad song of many birds, the flitting of the butterflies, the hum of all the little winged people among the branches, the sweet earth-scents—all seem to say the same, with an endless reiteration, never wearying because so gladsome . . ."

Thus Miss Jekyll. I was pleased to find that this high priestess of Flora commends the sweet-smelling, old-fashioned roses as "sweetest of all sweets". Small wonder that St. Anthony bestowed his hallowed name upon Roseland in Cornwall! Is a rose deserving of its name if it appeals to the eye alone?

Strange to reflect that a rose could be the symbol of Civil War! Brahma, cradled in a lotus, contended that the lily was the fairest flower, but Vishnu told him of a fairer. The two gods summoned the serpent of infinity, and on his back they travelled through space till Vishnu's palace revealed itself. The gods passed through a corridor of mother-of-pearl to a court where one tree bore a single rose, white as the snows

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of the Himalayas and distilling a perfect perfume. "This", said Vishnu, "is the fairest thing in heaven or earth." As he spoke the rose opened its petals, and Lakshmi stepped forth. "I am sent to be your wife," she whispered. "Because you were faithful to the rose, the rose is faithful to you." Whereupon Brahma exclaimed: "Vishnu shall be chief god henceforth, for in his paradise is the rose, and that is supreme above all flowers."

Mr. Skinner—whose book, if I were Mussolini, would be a text-book in our National schools—gives the Christian legend at some length. He will forgive me for putting it briefly into my own words. A young monk, before he became subject to the discipline of his Order, had been in the habit of placing a chaplet of roses upon a statue of Our Lady. He was instructed to say his Aves instead, inasmuch as prayers were more acceptable to the Virgin than roses. Robbers surprised him when he was praying. Even as he prayed, unconscious of the presence of evil men, he was enveloped in a mist, which took the form of a lovely woman, who drew from the monk's lips splendid roses, wound them into a chaplet and placed them on his head. The robbers joined their prayers with his, and became inmates of the monastery.

A legend about St. Elizabeth of Hungary was told to us as children, but we were warned that saints, under certain conditions, might lie *pour le bon motif* whereas children of tender years would do so at their proper peril. St. Elizabeth's husband, Louis, Landgrave of Thuringia in 1221, seems to have resented her piety and charity. He ordered her not to give away to the poor the broken meats they needed so sorely. The saint disobeyed him; and one day, when

June

she was carrying bread to her beneficiaries she met Louis unexpectedly. He asked her what she was carrying. The saint replied, "Roses." Louis commanded her to raise the lid of her basket. She did so ; Our Lady had changed the bread into roses !

Alban Butler makes no mention of this legend, but he describes Louis as a god-fearing, devoted husband, the last person to interfere with his wife's charities. When he died St. Elizabeth was wretched, and swore that she would devote the rest of her days to good works. The younger brother of Louis, who succeeded as Landgrave, treated her abominably. Perhaps he, not Louis, forced her to fib. Oddly enough, speaking of this legend to a niece, she said that she had read another version in a book, entitled *Bible Flowers*, written by Miss Rosemary Cotes. According to this author the saint confessed that she fibbed, and the miracle so softened her husband's heart that he became converted to Christianity. I give credence to Butler's declaration that Louis was already an exemplary Christian. My niece sent me another legend culled from Miss Cotes' book :

St. Rosa di Lima, the patron saint of South America, is always represented as wearing a wreath of roses, on account of the Peruvian tradition, which relates that when Pope Clement X was entreated to canonize her, he exclaimed : " Indian and Saint ! as likely as that it should rain roses ! " Whereupon a miraculous shower of roses began to fall, and did not cease until the Pontiff was convinced of the Indian's sanctity.

When Cupid spilled a cup of nectar, carrying it to the gods of Olympus, roses sprang from the ground.

Mothering Sunday was called Rose Sunday, because of yore the Pope on this day carried a golden rose in

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his hand on his way to mass. In France roses were worn on ladies' shoes up to the time of the Revolution, when rosettes took their place. I have been told by a friend that a certain Edward Rose, who died in the seventeenth century, bequeathed twenty pounds to the parish of Barnes in Surrey, on condition that rose trees should be planted and maintained upon his grave. The terms of this benefaction are still, so I understand, complied with. In Glamorganshire white roses bloomed upon virgins' tombs, whereas red roses were embedded on the graves of persons distinguished for benevolence of character. Of divination by rose-buds I can learn no details. Herrick mentions the custom in his *Hesperides* as *tabu* to brides :

*She must no more a-maying ;
Or by rose-buds divine
Who'll be her Valentine.*

Southey cites the legend of the origin of the rose, and wrote verses about it. Zillah, a Jewish maiden, was falsely accused of incontinence and condemned to be burnt in a field near Bethlehem. But the flames destroyed not her but her accuser.

*The stake
Buds out, and spreads its light green leaves, and bowers
The innocent maid, and roses bloom around,
Now first beheld since Paradise was lost,
And fill with Eden odours all the air.*

My brother and I are agreed that we shall be faithful to the roses faithful to us. We cherish Ophelia, Etoile de Hollande, General McArthur, Betty Uprichard, Hugh Dickson, Mabel Morse and Caroline Testout, because they repay so gratefully our attentions.

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Many a rose garden is spoiled (for us) because certain specimens look unhappy. But we understand the never-say-die spirit of neighbours whose blooms refuse to bloom despite the love lavished on them.

The roses soon withered that hung o'er the wave

*But some blossoms were gathered, while freshly they shone ;
And a dew was distill'd from their flowers that gave*

All the fragrance of summer, when summer was gone.

Here is a family recipe for pot-pourri :

Of rose-leaves one peck, gathered upon a fine day. Take a large jar and place in it one small handful of salt, then three handfuls of roses, and then salt and roses alternately. Let the last layer be salt. Stand this for five days, stirring same twice a day. At the end of five days add three ounces of allspice, and one ounce of stick cinnamon. Leave this for one week, *stirring daily*. Now prepare the following : Of ground cloves, stick cinnamon, ginger and aniseed one ounce of each, two ounces of orris-root, two grated nutmegs, and one half-pound of freshly dried lavender blossoms. Mix all thoroughly well together. Have ready now the permanent bowl or jar in which you propose to keep your pot-pourri. Put into it, first, one ounce of allspice, then add the rose-leaf stock as above prepared in layers, sprinkling between the layers some more of the mixed spices to which may be added, if you can procure them, freshly dried leaves of the rose-geranium, lemon verbena, sweet violets, or any other sweet-scented plant or flower. Fresh rose-leaves must never be added till they have been treated as above. From time to time stir well the contents of the bowl.

My brother made this pot-pourri forty years ago, *and it is still fragrant.*

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§ II

I HAVE read with amusement rather than instruction a correspondence in the *Bath Chronicle*, encouraged by the editor with an optimistic hope that the claims of the *prettiest* village in Somerset might be established. Somebody, with whom I sympathize, wrote that "his" village, where he was born and bred, was best. A stout fellow this—with a loyalty to which I touch my cap. Personally I have little stomach for beauty competitions. It would be possible to award pride of place to the village that scored most points. Allow so many marks, for instance, to site, natural beauty, architecture, absence of disfiguring features, variety, and so forth, with a few extra for a village green, a river or rivulet, a market cross, and any other outstanding feature, and sum up. Even then opinions would differ. I could set down the names of twenty villages in Wiltshire, Dorset, Gloucestershire and Somerset which might lay claim to the superlative. To award the prize to one would be a task beyond my powers. I can only indicate, as I do throughout this book, charms appealing to me. There is Castle Combe, which we shall visit later on, a village unique in its *personality*, like Clovelly, and Lacock, reputed to be the pride of Wiltshire. Quite impossible to compare these two gems of purest ray serene. Castle Combe is in the hills; Lacock, like Auburn, is of the plain. However, reading this vivacious correspondence, I came across an item which may surprise readers who believe that *Lorna Doone* is a Devon novel. The Doones were of Exmoor in Somerset; and the setting of the book is in Somerset.

Before visiting Glastonbury, the pilgrim in search of charm would do well to spend a day in Lacock.

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It is enchanting. You can stroll down the centuries, lingering in each. King John passed a night in one of the houses. The sister of William Longsword founded the Abbey. Elizabeth came here upon one of her innumerable and expensive progresses. Here flourished the weaving industry and chair-making. Thanks to Miss Talbot, the present *châtelaine*, and her predecessors, the village has preserved its character. There is nothing to offend even the hypercritical eye.

In Lacock the keystone of the arch linking present to past is stability. The motto *J'y suis, j'y reste* might be inscribed above every lintel. It is the England that was. I saw it first in June under the right conditions with nothing to disturb a peace expressing itself as the serenity of a ripe and mellow age. It looked "cared for" and cherished. An up-to-date young woman said to me not long ago: "Do you prefer places to persons?" I replied that persons made and unmade places. Ever since I have reflected that a novelist or dramatist could have amplified this theme, because he, blest or cursed with a lively imagination, cannot look at any place, especially an ancient house, without summoning up from the vasty deep the men who built it and the persons who lived in it. A dramatist can see his characters in an imaginary setting, even as the stone-deaf Beethoven could hear his sonatas as he set the notes on paper. The average antiquary and archæologist is concerned with the inanimate *thing*, which accounts for so much dry-as-dust description. Some of our county historians have spent their lives in the dust of the past, compiling names which remain names to their readers, names belonging to shadowy ghosts, names long dead which might live again, had they been treated with imagination and sympathy.

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It happened, too, that I strolled about Lacock upon a perfect day, when June was at her tenderest, bewitchingly so. It might have been too hot or too cold. A soft breeze from the south-west tempered the warm sunshine; a recent shower had fallen, evoking the fragrance of mother earth. The village lies in a sequestered vale. Here Gray might have written not an elegy but a psalm of life. He would have seen no weary ploughman, because Lacock is set in meadows verdantly green at this time of year. The freshness of the grasses and foliage seemed to rejuvenate the old houses. This, of course, was the right day for talk with the villagers, whom I found to be appreciative of their amenities, and smilingly ready to answer questions. In the George Inn is a turn-spit wheel. It would not surprise me to learn that the older inhabitants still roast their meats instead of baking them. Many of the houses are delightfully half-timbered with an equally delightful variety of roofs and gables. The High Street is wide and spacious. Hard by meanders the Avon through fields where cattle stand up to their knees in lush grass.

The fourteenth-century church is dedicated to St. Cyriac.

Now who, pray, was St. Cyriac? Alban Butler speaks of him with disappointing brevity as a holy deacon in Rome, who suffered martyrdom under Diocletian. His church was built in the fourteenth century and has a charming little chantry chapel at the end of the north aisle. A double hagioscope is in the north transept. A hagioscope is, vulgarly, a "squint", an aperture through which one could see, formerly, the altar in the Lady Chapel. Near the church are three quaint old buildings which will repay careful scrutiny.

June

If you approach Lacock from Corsham, be sure to notice the Almshouses (close to the fine iron entrance gates to Corsham Court) founded in 1668 by Lady Hungerford. Here is a great porch surmounted by a marvellous coat of arms. There are six houses with a cloister, master's house, and free school. I found a lovely sketch of it, by Sidney Jones, in Mr. Ditchfield's book *The Charm of the English Village*. It is surprising that the author makes no mention of Lacock.

The Abbey was once an Augustine Nunnery, founded in 1232. Up and down the beautiful cloisters paced in silence the nuns of many generations. The pilgrim will note a niche where books (not an extensive collection) were kept which the nuns read during their perambulations. There are a finely proportioned Chapter House and a fan-vaulted "parlour" where the holy women were permitted to talk. One wonders what they talked about. In the Sacristy (and elsewhere) where the fan vaulting meets the supporting pillars and pilasters, corbels of heads of women have been carved. I failed to discover one man's head. In what was called the Warming Chamber, the only room in which the nuns were allowed a fire, stands a gigantic bell-metal cauldron, weighing more than a ton, with a capacity of sixty-seven gallons. On it is this inscription in Latin :

"I was founded or made by Peter Wachbuens, of Mechlin, in the year of Our Lord 1500. Praise to God and Glory to Christ."

Here also is a colossal stone water-trough hewn from one block of Bath stone, measuring ten by three feet.

Ela, Countess of Salisbury, founded this Abbey, and was its first Abbess. Sir William Sharrington, sometime page to Henry VIII, purchased the Abbey at

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the time of its dissolution. He had a niece called Olive, who fell in love with John Talbot, and there is an apocryphal story of how she leapt from a high tower (still to be seen) into the outstretched arms of her lover standing below. The maid escaped with a trifling injury, the man was nearly killed ! Nevertheless, this leap served its purpose. A marriage between the pair was sanctioned ; and the Talbots have held the estate ever since ! Long may they continue to do so.

In the Great Hall are innumerable escutcheons. Miss Talbot told me that these were shields emblazoning the arms not of the Talbots but of the friends and neighbours of the ancestor who built this noble room. What a happy memorial !

§ III

CORPUS CHRISTI DAY falls on the 2nd of June. Religious plays, or mysteries, were performed in Catholic countries, and leave from the Pope was granted to have them done in English in this kingdom. They were played upon the Thursday following Trinity Sunday, gorgeous pageants before the Reformation, encouraged by the City Fathers because, as Dugdale observes, " the yearly confluence of people to see the shews was extraordinary great and yielded no small advantage to the city ". These mystery plays, even if deemed impious by the reformers, must have taught the children sacred history.

§ IV

THE once-joyful Feast of St. John the Baptist falls on June 24th. But the lesser saint, Barnabas, is most often on the lips of the children.

June

*Barnaby Bright, Barnaby Bright,
The longest day and the shortest night.*

St. John's Eve still means something to credulous village maids, although St. John's-wort is no longer attached to doors and windows to purify the home and drive away evil spirits. Nor is it likely that a crooked bone in a frog's leg if ground fine and given in food to any person, will win the affections of the receiver to the giver, culminating in happy marriage. But it is still deemed lucky for a child to be born on St. John's Eve. Brand is my authority for certain customs too entertaining to be forgotten. "I and my two sisters tried the dumb-cake together; you must know that two make it, two bake it, two break it, and the third put it under each of their pillows (but you must not speak a word all the time), and then you will dream of the man you are to have." If, at midnight, a maid sows hemp-seed in the backyard, saying to herself: "Hemp-seed I sow, Hemp-seed I hoe, and he that is my true love come after me and mow", the right man will appear. The young lady who practised this charm, adds: "Our maid Betty tells me that if I go backwards, without speaking a word, into the garden, on Midsummer's Eve, gather a rose, and keep it in a clean sheet of paper, without looking at, till Christmas Day, it will be as fresh as June; and if I then stick it into my bosom, he that is to be my husband will come and take it out." Brand cites the following lines:

*The moss-rose that at fall of dew,
(Ere Eve its duskier curtain drew)
Was freshly gathered from its stem,
She values as the ruby gem;
And guarded from the piercing air,
With all a lover's anxious care,*

This was England

*She bids it, for her shepherd's sake,
Await the new-year's frolic wake—
When faded in its altered hue
She reads—the rustic is untrue !
But if it leaves the crimson paint,
Her sick'ning hopes no longer faint.
The rose upon her bosom worn,
She meets him at the peep of morn !
And, lo ! her lips with kisses prest,
He plucks it from her panting breast.*

Grose says :

“ Any unmarried woman fasting on Midsummer Eve, and at midnight laying a clean cloth with bread, cheese and ale, and sitting down as if going to eat, the street door being left open, the person whom she is afterwards to marry will come into the room and drink to her by bowing ; and after filling the glass will leave it on the table ; and, making another bow, retire.”

Did he retire ? Didn't Corydon know that such refreshment had been prepared by the light-handed Phyllis.

Where are the magical stones once found under plantain and mugwort ? Writers of the seventeenth century affirm that they have seen them, and testify also to their beneficent uses. He who carried one was immune against the plague, carbuncle, lightning and the quartan ague.

§ v

IT was in June, long ago, that I first saw Glastonbury, but I had not then read Mallory's *Morte d'Arthur*. Our librarian tells me that it is seldom read by Bathonians. It is, from the first page to the last, a glorification of the sword. The Britons, long before King Arthur came to Camelot, gave their children food on

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the sword's point to make them brave in battle. Old men entreated their sons to slay them with a sword, so that they might die worthily. Mallory must have known this. We get from him Homeric accounts of combats, and he portrays faithfully the romance and chivalry of that legendary day, but one seeks in vain for convincing details about the knights apart from their fighting and love-making. Of the common people he has little to record.

The first Christian Church in England was built at Glastonbury of wattled osiers, under, so it is said, the personal supervision of St. Joseph of Arimathea, whose staff bloomed into the famous thorn which blossomed twice a year. The monastery founded by St. Dunstan was burnt in 1184, and a century later the most glorious fane in England, nearly six hundred feet in length, challenged the attention of all Christendom. Here the spell of the past is potent. The pilgrim should view it by moonlight—and alone. Let him climb to the top of Weary-all-Hill, and, although the sacred thorn is no longer there, he can reflect that cuttings taken from it are still blooming elsewhere. I have said that this is Merlin's country. The pilgrim stands

*In the island valley of Avilion,
Where falls not hail, or rain, or any snow,
Nor ever wind blows loudly ; but it lies
Deep-meadowed, happy, fair with orchard lawns,
And bowery billows crown'd with summer sea.*

Tennyson used a poet's licence, but he conveys, as only a poet can, the character of the spot which St. Joseph saw in a dream. What is now moor or meadow was once an inland lake studded with islands of which Avalon was one. What was neither hill nor sea was marsh. The Britons lived here till the Romans came

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and built roads and imposed some measure of their civilization. The Saxons followed and were withstood by King Arthur and his Knights. The Danes in turn pillaged the Saxons till Alfred drove them out of Wessex. Much of this early history is legendary; but it is certain that Glastonbury, whether or not King Arthur reigned at Camelot, became a mighty shrine and sanctuary. It remains so to this day. Before the cruel murder of the good abbot Whiting by Henry VIII, it was the Mecca of innumerable pilgrims. Thirty thousand are said to have come to Glastonbury *on one day*. Twice as many go to Twickenham to witness a game of football! But one wonders how they were lodged and boarded. The Abbot's Kitchen, an octagonal building in perfect preservation, holds four huge fireplaces big enough to roast an ox. There must have been hecatombs of sheep, and barbecues at hundreds of camp-fires. Where—one asks in vain—stood the Abbot's larder? How was it kept supplied? Is it possible to compute the profits of the caterers? Did the farmers grow wheat? Or did St. Dunstan and St. Patrick perform miracles when the multitudes were fed? Let our universal providers answer such questions.

The charm of Glastonbury includes material considerations. In the lake villages dominated by Glastonbury Tor Celts made beautiful pottery, rings and brooches of bronze, bill-hooks, saws and adzes of iron. They were skilled craftsmen. Mr. Walter Raymond deals faithfully with this primitive age so much less primitive than we take it to be, but he makes no attempt to measure the prosperity of Wessex after the huge Abbey was built. I cannot find anywhere an up-to-date account of the humdrum daily life

June

of the laymen without the pale of the monastery. Chaucer is a supreme authority. His *Canterbury Tales* should be read by the pilgrim before he visits Glastonbury. The pilgrims who travelled in company to Canterbury travelled also to Glastonbury. Unhappily, Chaucer's language is difficult to read. Hallam, in his *Literature of Europe*, lays emphasis on the poet's acuteness of observation. Chaucer, not Merlin, is the wizard who can make the pilgrim of to-day both see and hear, and understand the pilgrims of the past. It is unfortunate that neither Monstrelet nor Froissart have a word to say about Glastonbury, although these chroniclers convey so artlessly *atmosphere*. Reading them one realizes how little persons change. I return to Chaucer. It is worth while struggling with his archaic felicities of expression, if you are seeking the charm that remains the inward, spiritual grace of Glastonbury. We are too apt to think of pilgrims as pious folk. Chaucer reveals them as flesh and blood, Everymen like ourselves.

You can make intimate acquaintance with the men and women of Chaucer's day if you take, each in his or her turn, the characters in the *Tales*. The knight, who loved chivalry, that lusty bachelor, the young squire, the reeve, a steward who married a lady of noble kin, the cook, who had no scorn of warmed-up dishes, the lawyer, discreet and of great reverence, that stout carle, the miller, the gentle manciple, a caterer and therefore humorously described as one "in good estate", the wife of Bath (who must have known her Glastonbury) and wove the cloth she wore, the shipman, who loved his glass of Bordeaux, the poor parson rich of "holy thought and work", the gentle pardoner, licensed to sell indulgences, the car-

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penter, dyer, and tapiser—all are resurrected from the dead beneath the touch of the poet. They live again ; a jolly crew, each a personality, as vividly presented as Shakespeare's or Dickens' characters. Conquer the difficulties of the diction, not too strenuous a task, and you will find the past indissolubly linked up with the present. Believe me it is worth while doing this if you wish to visit Glastonbury in the right spirit.

When you pass from pre-Reformation days to the succeeding centuries, it is well to bear in mind that our villages were microcosms, self-supporting and self-sufficient till the railways came. Here in Somerset cloth was woven ; the farmers supplied the food ; ale and cider were home-brewed ; the local builder used materials ready to his hand and fancy ; the squire, no absentee, was as a rule a beneficent autocrat. The peasantry had many holidays, and—despite cottages which to-day might be condemned as insanitary—enjoyed rude health. If you feel inclined to cast a stone at the clergy, set the Vicar of Wakefield against Parson Trulliber, and attempt to establish a mean between such extremes.

It is impossible to evoke the spell of our countryside unless you talk with countrymen racy of the soil. Gamekeepers, woodmen, fishermen, gypsies, stonemasons and each man, woman, and child engaged in old-world avocations. All can tell the traveller something which he does not know. Appetite for such talk grows as you talk. But the men who work apart from others are niggardly of speech till their distrust of a "furriner" is dispelled. Gamekeepers, as you find them throughout the kingdom are treasurers of Arcadian lore. The woodmen of Wessex are as

June

Thomas Hardy described them sixty years ago. Coax them (or bribe them with a foaming tankard) to talk of personal experience, and you are likely to be confounded by your own ignorance. I love the phrase so often on their lips: "Ah-h-h, I knaws what I knaws." Their knowledge is convincing, fresh as dew to the dwellers in cities, hardly ever tedious or tiresome. I am hard put to it to determine whether their sly, whimsical humour is conscious. A granfer was dozing in his ingle-nook whilst his wife, daughter and granddaughter were all talking at once. Suddenly the old man began to mutter. His daughter shook him. "Granfer, you be a-talkin' in yer sleep." The ancient winked a rheumy eye. "Ya-as," he growled, "talkin' in me sleep, seemin'ly, be the on'y chance I gets wi' sech chatterboxes." During the war, a petty tradesman of my acquaintance, who sold absurd odds and ends in a tiny shop, was interrogated by a truculent female in khaki. "Why aren't you serving your king?" she asked. The man, past military age, replied solemnly: "I'll tell 'ee fur why. 'Cos I ain't got enough stuff to serve me own customers."

A Dorset squire, whom I know, asked an old tenant if he still farmed. He replied: "Yes; I have three cows to keep my mind occupied, and a few fowls to keep the fox amused."

Before the advent of the bicycle the men used to walk immense distances to and from their work. One man, who lived at Stalbridge, was employed in the building of Yeovil Junction station. Each day he walked to and from his work: a distance of eleven miles . . . !

A friend of mine told an ancient that he had heard the cuckoo on Lady Day. He replied: "I dunno'

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as I b'likes that-a-at, but cuckoo do come when he be minded."

Fishermen, if you are out sailing with them, are good companions, fine judges of character, disdainful of humbug in any form, rare weather-prophets. How faithfully they are portrayed in the late Mr. Stephen Reynold's *A Poor Man's House*. Miners are too hardened by overwork to be good gossips, but you can wriggle under their crusts if you mention whippets and football. It is certain that you learn from children more than they learn from you.

I take leave of Glastonbury and the Avalon country with the same regret that assails me when the towers of Wells fade out of sight. I wish that I lived nearer to these sanctuaries. And yet there remains the glad expectation of revisiting them and finding in them fresh inspiration.

§ VI

EVEN as so many of our holy wells have ceased to be, our village crosses, once as numerous as Calvaries in Brittany, are disappearing. A Bathonian, within the past few months, stigmatized as a snob a fellow townsman who had described petrol pumps as blots upon the landscape. Gentlemen of his kidney filled up the wells with rubbish and pulled down the crosses. Apart from spiritual significance our crosses have been the centre of village life. From the steps of one near St. Mary's church at Bridgwater, Monmouth proclaimed himself to be king of this realm. They dominated the market-place. Stocks and pillories were not far away. Crosses in existence, piously preserved, exercise their spell, if you pause to think of the thousands who have knelt on the worn steps.

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Mr. Ditchfield says that they reminded the people of the sacredness of bargains. Troths were plighted beside them. Penitents knelt at their bases and confessed their sins *coram populo*.

§ VII

I SEE no reason why village life much as it was in the eighteenth century, and even up to the advent of the railroads, should not be rehabilitated. Centralization is a curse; decentralization would restore prosperity to the countryside. Gladstone's vision of "three acres and a cow" provoked ridicule, although, in better ordered France, peasant proprietors flourish. On many cattle ranches in California the cowboys put tinned milk into their tea. It was not held to be "business" to raise anything except beef. But my brother and I knew one man who had taken up land not far from us in a sheltered *cañon* near the sea with a trout stream running through it. He became a remarkable provider, supporting in comfort, almost in luxury, himself, his stout wife, and half a score of children. He irrigated part of his land and planted alfalfa and berries; he raised vegetables and fruit, he peddled chickens, ducks, geese and turkeys (bred on his small domain), fish, game and wild honey. He lived like a fighting cock! And he was the most contented man of our acquaintance, joyfully independent of others. He worked hard, and slept like a dormouse. He hired no "Help" because his wife and children were his active partners, and he made enough (and no more) to buy what he was unable to provide: groceries and clothing. His wife said to me: "I up and married a MAN." She did.

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His was the simple life in a get-rich-quick country, where men pride themselves upon laying eggs in one basket and giving undivided attention to that basket. Public opinion, which he disdained, lent him no support. He kept out of saloons and out of politics; he studied Nature at first hand, and wooed her in all her moods and tenses. He had the simplicity and the honesty of Fenimore Cooper's "Pathfinder", and was as good a "shot" with a rifle. What he did can be done by others.

§ VIII

THE feast-days of St. Peter and St. Paul fall upon the 29th and 30th of June. What authentic evidence there is for these dates I do not know. It is affirmed that together they suffered martyrdom in Rome, *circa* A.D. 67. Alban Butler tells us little that is not generally known. Fishermen used to repaint their boats upon St. Peter's Day. Farriers blooded cart-horses on the Feast of St. Paul. It is strange that these two great apostles, of whom we know so much that is authentic, are not more intimately connected with English customs, but so it is.

§ IX

THIS June we were disappointed in our irises, a source of pride and glory in 1931. There are now so many varieties of this historic flower that they need a catalogue of their own. The *fleur-de-lys*, or *fleur-de-luce*, of France was named after Louis VII, who bore it upon his white standards in his crusades of 1137. Mr. Skinner speaks of it as typical of wisdom, faith, and courage. To grow it to perfection exacts

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these qualities. Its petals cured spleens, fits, dropsy and snakebites. Few of us know that orris-root is iris-root upon which children once cut their teeth. I cut mine upon a "coral", mounted in silver-gilt and encircled with fairy bells, which had served both my mother and grandmother when they were babies. When did coral replace orris-root in nurseries? Coral rubbed upon the gums preserved the babies, so Mr. Lean says, against the falling sickness. To this statement is appended a note: "The first tooth cast by a child should be swallowed by the mother to ensure a new growth," an injunction from America. Coral beads, encircling the necks of children, were a charm against the evil eye; and the West Indian negroes believe that the colour of coral is affected by the health of the wearer.

Orris, according to Mr. Skinner, removes the smell of liquor, garlic and tobacco from reformable breaths. "Reformable" is good.

We have been fortunate with our peonies, cited by Pliny as the earliest known of medicinal plants. Beads made from the peony root control convulsions in children; and Burton affirms that "peony doth cure epilepsy". The Japanese have more than five hundred varieties. Mr. Skinner cites one ancient belief that the flower sprang from a moonbeam, and, in another, from a blushing shepherdess, Paeonia, whose charms provoked the love of the God of Day, Apollo.

We are eliminating peonies that withhold perfume. There is the tree peony and the shrub, both do well in our herbaceous borders, facing south, and refuse to bloom—justifying the classic legend—where the sun is less ardent. A group of scarlet peonies in early June

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is an arresting sight, but it should stand by itself, far away from flowers of tenderer hue.

It has occurred to me—probably to many others—that a tiny garden, like a herb garden, might be devoted to the luck-bringing flowers, where unlucky mortals could sit and allow the blossoms to weave their spells. In India, necklaces are made of lucky stones, necklaces which include the opal. When did the opal become malefic except to those born in chill October? It was once esteemed the luckiest of gems, a detector of poison within the wine-cup. I hazard the conjecture that the Wizard of the North maligned it in *Anne of Geierstein*. The lovely Persian, Hermione, who married the Baron Arnheim, wore a matchless opal in a brooch. Arnheim flicked holy water upon it. The opal shot out a brilliant spark, like a falling star, and became the instant afterwards lightless and colourless as a common pebble, while the beautiful Baroness sunk on the floor of the chapel with a deep sigh of pain. A few hours afterwards nothing mortal was left of her except a few fine grey ashes upon the bed where she was laid. At a time when Sir Walter Scott's novels were read and eagerly discussed in every drawing-room, it is likely that this incident made a deep impression. The opal is unlucky for another reason; it is fragile, and it may, unexpectedly, disintegrate.

Among the luck-bringing flowers, sacred to the Romans, we can include the rose, lily, violet, anemone, hyacinth and narcissus—and many others. A garden of good luck might have for its centre a sundial with a suitable inscription, stone-paved paths, and, if possible, a containing wall. I bespeak stone benches with oak or teak seats. It might be surrounded by a pergola of ramblers. It exacts a pool with attendant *Amorini*.

•

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§ I

OUR woodland garden woes me. I took to it this script determined to slaughter superfluous adjectives. Somehow my mind dwelt instead upon the adjective "cantankerous" as applied to Old Maids.

Where are these cantankerous spinsters?

I have scoured this neighbourhood and failed to find one. To speak of the unmarried, middle-aged (or elderly) woman as soured, peevish, narrow-minded, or "pernickety" is ridiculous. I am beginning to believe that our old maids are the custodians of the charm that I am seeking, and entitled therefore to my attention however unworthy I may be to touch such porcelain. The adjectives just set down can be bestowed upon many married women: unhappy wives, unhappy mothers, bitterly disappointed, aggressively resentful of conditions which they are impotent to control or modify. There is an increasing number of them. Possibly the spinsters look jolly and contented because they have escaped the disabilities of wifehood and motherhood.

I can remember when stout matrons wiped away tears as the bride came down the aisle on the arm of the groom. On such occasions the old maids smiled. They have gone on smiling ever since.

What a gallant brigade they are, these spinsters, if

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you purge your mind of preconceived opinions concerning them. It has amused me to ask a dozen men if they could point out *one* cantankerous old maid. Certain troglodytes cease at a certain age to be men, and become fretful, irritable, rancorous old women. They fuss over trifles ; they sniff ; they backbite ; they sit in their clubs exuding scandal, and are a nuisance to themselves and everybody else. When one of them clears his throat he clears the room. Their worst offence is to ramble on about grievances more or less imaginary ; they talk to women upon subjects of no interest to their listeners. In fine, they are incurably selfish and self-centred. The old maids are sweet to these preposterous bores, being so sound at core themselves.

Old maids are supposed to be scandal-mongers, but in the hunting-field, a rare hot-bed for gossip, I have listened to slanders sown broadcast by men. A woman tattler handles gossip with delicacy. For the most part her chit-chat may be defined as an intelligent interest in the affairs of others.

Our preconceived idea of the old maid denies her a sense of humour. What a stab in the back ! All women, constrained to be onlookers at the great game of life, develop humour, because they observe trifles. The women of to-day who compete with men in so many fields of endeavour are losing humour because they have to concentrate all energies upon their objectives. They see the forest, not the trees.

My traffics with old maids have been increasingly agreeable, because I never discuss sex with them. Like flowers and weeds, we are bi-sexual. The cave-man and the cave-woman are not interesting except on the film. Civilized man, born of woman, must have a lot of his mother in him—and *vice versa*.

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Ever since I was a boy I have wondered why certain women, taking upon themselves the vows of celibacy, voluntarily surrendering so much that makes life worth living, submitting humbly to severest discipline, taking to prayer and fasting and self-denial, should exhibit to a wondering world serene, cheerful countenances? It cannot be denied that they do so in public. It is inconceivable that alone in their cells they suffer regret, at heart unresigned to their self-imposed condition. If this were the case, they would bear the *stigmata* of such miseries and torments. I have seen troubled faces on the shoulders of young maids prematurely vowed to celibacy, but rarely indeed in the case of the older "sisters", at peace with themselves, having found the peace that passes the lay understanding.

Our old maids live within their means; they do what they like and what they don't like with philosophical self-possession. They keep the score and their tempers when they play bridge. They are not immune from the ordinary ills of the flesh, but they bear these with fortitude. They have more facets than the matrons, reflecting and transmitting light from without. But it is the light within which, like a lamp set in a window upon a dark night, allures all who come within sight of it.

If I were recovering from a severe illness I should like one of our old maids to come and see me. She wouldn't irritate me by talking about her own ailments. As likely as not she would bring me a book that would beguile me, or a nosegay from her garden. She would talk, as I should wish her to do, about common friends and acquaintance. She would present a small budget of local news, careful neither to excite nor depress me. When she left I should miss her. . . .

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But my old friend, Lawless, when he tried to cheer me up after a bad accident in the hunting-field, told me of *his* accidents—and he seemed to have broken every bone in his body except, regrettably, his neck ! I wonder that I mounted a horse again.

The old maids are seasoned veterans who have fought and conquered in the fight against themselves, gay survivors of their civil wars. They have achieved independence. They stand in serried ranks, shoulder to shoulder, secure from capture, impregnable against assault. They go their ways in peace.

May peace be with them—to the end !

§ II

ST. SWITHIN'S DAY comes in mid-July. The vulgar tag is untrue and was ridiculed by Ben Jonson. "Why it should rain forty days after was a rule held afore I was able to hold a plough, and yet here are two days and no rain ! Ha ! It makes me muse." In 1887, after a drought in June, it rained heavily on St. Swithin's Day, but the drought re-established itself and was not broken till the end of August. And so—a fig, and a dried one at that—for this lying tag. But sea-gulls on land indicate rain.

*Sea-gull, sea-gull, get thee on't sand,
'Twill never be fine while thou'rt on land.*

I never saw so many puffins and oyster-catchers far inland as I did when I was fishing a Scotch river during a rainy May.

The saint, chaplain to King Egbert and preceptor to his son, Ethelwolf, died bishop of Winchester, leaving directions that his body should be laid where drops of rain might wet his grave, thinking that "no

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vault was so good to cover him as that of heaven". Nevertheless, later on, when Swithin was canonized, troublesome monks deemed it impious for a saint to lie in the open churchyard, and resolved to move his body into the choir of the minster church on the 15th day of July. It rained so violently on that day, and for forty days afterwards, that the project had to be abandoned.

In Somerset, rain on St. Swithin's Day is called the christening of the apples.

§ III

AN old gammer assured me that it was lucky for a baby to be born in July. If it be happy for a bride to be sun-bathed, it must be even more beneficial to an infant. The folk-lore concerning babies is amusing, and still current in hamlets. It is very unlucky for a baby to see itself in a looking-glass before it is a year old. Don't let a cat come near it, because it may suck away its breath. A baby born upon the stroke of noon will grow up silly. Village "wise women" hold that it is unlucky to weigh a baby. When a baby laughs in his sleep is he talking with the angels? Lean gives a whimsical citation about a baby's "longing". "Baby," said a nurse, "is so uncommon fretty I do believe he must be longing for something." To the question, "What could he be longing for?" the nurse replied: "Something that his mother longed for, but did not get, before he was born; and the best way to satisfy him, I think, would be to try him with a brandy cherry or some hare's brains."

If you tickle a baby's toes, he will be a stammerer. Perhaps this happened to Demosthenes. If a baby

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is continually stuffing fingers into its eyes, the door may come off the hinges.

I find myself wondering what virtue underlies these quaint superstitions. So far as the babies were concerned it is likely that myths lent colour to the otherwise drab lives of mothers. And one can imagine a mother repeating the stories to a child left in charge of the baby. How many young girls stayed safe at home because they feared to venture forth at night? An innocent belief in myths must have kindled and nourished youthful imaginations. I should like to believe, wholeheartedly, the myths about the flowers. I am sorry for the child who jeers at the Little People. I have yet to meet a child who, if you get it alone, does not love a fairy tale.

§ IV

OUR delphiniums, like the irises, refused to bloom as finely as they did in 1931. Delphinium is a genus of Ranunculaceæ which include the larkspur (delightful name) and stavesacre. It is wiser (and much cheaper) to grow these gorgeous blooms from seed. The colour of the old-fashioned *Belladonna* (again well named) is, so we think, the most superb blue of all. Plants repay the richest cultivation.

If larkspur be thrown before a scorpion the ancients declared that the flower deprived the noxious beast of its venom. Larkspur had on its petals the letters A.I.A., commemorative of Ajax, the terror of the Trojans. It may be recalled that this stout warrior, dissatisfied with the spoils awarded to him, wreaked his fury upon a number of sheep, stabbing them with his sword. Ashamed of this outburst he then stabbed

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himself—and died. His blood flowered into the *Delphinium Ajacis*, but some—so Mr. Skinner affirms—who are only able to read the two letters on the petals of the flower construe them as “Ai”, a wailing cry still to be heard throughout the east when Fate is unkind. The name *delphinium* was given to the flower by botanists because the buds resemble a dolphin. It is also called lark’s-toe and lark’s-claw.

Any flowering shrub with yellow flowers can be massed next to it, in a herbaceous border, with striking effect. Miss Jekyll commends as a near neighbour the Silver Thistle, another July beauty.

This year a parochial fête was held in our garden, and we nearly doubled the “takings” of 1931. Inasmuch as we only charged sixpence for admittance and a shilling for an excellent tea, we congratulated ourselves upon a profit of fifty pounds. It was great fun. We had a skittle alley and many side-shows. Children, on payment of a penny, hoped to secure sixpence by dipping their faces into a basin of water and trying to suck up the elusive coin with their lips. Few succeeded. Another penny secured a time allowance of two minutes during which the neck of a bottle had to be encircled by a ring at the end of a line attached to a willow stick. A comic gentleman, wearing a tall hat, strolled, as leisurely as Mr. Pecksniff, behind a net which only reached to his chin, head and hat being within a fifteen foot range: a cock-shy with tennis balls at three shies a penny, and a veritable copper mine to our treasury. Gamblers were urged to drop a penny into a bucket of water where a new florin lay as bait. If you covered the florin with the dropped penny it was yours. That florin paid for itself many times. Next year we hope to have a Caledonia market

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where bargains, picked up as grants-in-aid after a house-to-house visitation of the parish, will be offered to housewives attending the fête towards its close. We had, this year, dancing on the bowling-green, to the strains of a band (a gramophone with microphone attachment) hidden in the woodland garden. Thanks to fine weather we marked this as a red-letter day in our calendar. A local dog-story rewarded me for my efforts. It was told to me by our postmaster. Both his wife and daughter confirmed the tale, and because it happened, and throws a searchlight on canine intelligence, it is worth repeating here.

Two dogs, strangers to each other, one much bigger than the other, met in the post office, growled—and fought. The postmaster, behind his counter, saw that the smaller dog was the aggressor. The owners, also strangers to each other, separated the dogs, and went their ways. An hour later the smaller dog came back alone. He sniffed about the post office, satisfied himself that his enemy was not there, and departed. He came back about closing-time, and indicated, by his behaviour, a surly disappointment. Upon the following day he reappeared with a large bone which he carried in his mouth. To the amusement of the postmaster he sat down and waited in the hope that the other dog would appear. He made no attempt to gnaw the bone. There he sat till he was driven away—!

As we are now fairly in the dog-days I make no apology for telling two more stories. There are two dogs in our parish, who, habitually, carry a penny to a local confectioner to buy biscuits. One of these dogs appeared with sixpence which he laid, as usual, on the counter. He was given a large bag of biscuits and refused to take it. The confectioner, divining what

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his customer wanted, gave him a penn'orth of biscuits and five pence in change, which was placed in the bag. The dog trotted off. For five days in succession he appeared with a penny and got his customary ration. *I do not believe this story.*

My third and best story I do believe, because I took pains to verify it. Some twenty years ago a gentleman living near to a station on the Southampton-Bournemouth line owned a retriever who suffered a bad injury to his paw. The owner took the dog, not by train but in his car, to a vet in Southampton, and left him for a week's treatment. Three days later the dog, with a bandaged paw, was seen limping on to the platform at Southampton West. He hung about till a train came in, and it happened that the guard of the train recognized the dog. The dog entered the guard's van and lay down. The guard made a fuss of him, and guessed that the dog wanted a free ride home. He left the van when he reached the station near his master's house, wagged his tail, and made off. This story was told all over the New Forest. Forthwith I interviewed the guard and a porter. They swore to me that the story was true.

§ v

THE day of the Seven Sleepers of Ephesus comes in July. The legend outwinkles Rip Van Winkle. These sleepers, canonized afterwards, were disturbed by the heresy denying the resurrection of the dead. Accordingly they retired to a cave in a mountain, which was walled in, and they were seen no more by their contemporaries. Masons opened the cave two hundred and twenty-nine years later. The

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Seven Sleepers awoke and saluted each other : " Supposing verily that they had slepte but one nyght onely." One of them, Malchus, strode away to buy bread for himself and his companions. He walked to Ephesus, where he was astonished to find a cross above the gate. He entered a baker's and tendered money, whereupon the baker exclaimed : " This yonge man hath found old treasure." Ultimately he was haled before a consul, who summoned a bishop. And the bishop summoned the emperor, from Constantinople, and that potentate beheld the other young men " settynge in the cave, and they visages lyke unto roses flouryng ". Whereupon the emperor embraced them. The Seven Sleepers demanded that he should believe in the Resurrection of the Dead, for to that end they had been miraculously raised from the dead. After this they gave up the ghost.

In a breviary at Salisbury there is a prayer for the 27th of July, beseeching the benefit of the resurrection through the prayers of the Seven Sleepers who proclaimed the eternal resurrection.

§ VI

IT is so hot that I must go back to the woodland garden. My brother has reminded me of an experience common to gardeners who display their rarer plants to unenlightened visitors. On such occasions he, as I can testify, holds his tongue, and one such visitor may have thought that silence indicated ignorance. The lady, at any rate, wished to impress him. She rattled off half a dozen Latin names with nimblest wit. This, surely, was a *Grandiflora*, and that, unless memory failed her, was her old friend,

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Microcarpa. She babbled on, thoroughly enjoying herself, till they paused in front of a *berberis* in the rock-garden. "I have forgotten this," she exclaimed. My brother, recalling the high-sounding name of a diatom, said: "No, no, you must know that—*Amphi-pleura Pellucida*." The lady nodded: "Why, of course, I know it well. As you say—*Amphi-pleura Pellucida*!"

If this lady happens to read these lines, will she smile as blandly as my brother smiled? Will she hold her tongue, as he did?

§ VII

THE woodland garden is too green for my catholic fancy in July, and the warblers after the Hallelujah choruses of June are silent. But the ferns are in full beauty, and our tinkling rivulet, despite the drought of the previous month, has not decreased its volume of water. In the middle pool is an islet whose rocks are snug harbourage for the troutlets. My brother suggests that we should take a tin, enclose in it half a dozen silver coins, newly minted, and bury the tin on the island—to be found, perhaps, a hundred years hence—treasure-trove. What else could one add? Something suggesting, perhaps, that a child had played this innocent joke upon other children as yet unborn. A necklace of the glass beads now worn, the doll's head which we found by the buried fountain, and a relic of my own childhood, a highly polished bit of petrified wood, or an egg of Blue-John (which I should be loth to sacrifice).

This must be done. By the naiads of our pools, it shall be done!

A visitor entreated us to remove the whiskers from the trunks of our lindens, but these are the nesting-

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places of the robins, who would resent such destruction. Also the whiskers hide a wall. In this wall lurk edible snails, but we do not eat them. Our head gardener tells us that children pick them out and sell them! To whom do they sell them? Somewhere in the whiskers lives a hedgehog, who can be beguiled with a saucer of milk. This quaint little beast has been used, emblematically, to represent a bad neighbour; its bristles, when set up, forbidding a near approach. In Leviticus the hedgehog is forbidden meat, but the gypsies do not think so. In the Mendips and Cotswolds hedgehogs are maliciously accused of drawing milk from the udders of cows at night. Brockett points out that their mouths are too small to do this, but he goes on to say that they love eggs. The *Manchester Gazette* records that in July, 1826, hedgehogs were seen in the public streets of Oldham in Lancashire. The brooks had run dry, and the thirsty little animals were obliged to throw themselves upon the mercy and protection of "their good neighbours in the town".

My brother met a hedgehog in our garden, who forthwith turned tail, and hid his head, not his body, in a clump of *Arabis*. My brother stroked his quills the right way; the hedgehog never budged. Is he remotely of kin to the ostrich? On another occasion I was having tea out of doors when I espied one on the lawn. I poured milk into a saucer and stalked him. He appeared to eye me with indifference rather than hostility. I hid behind a tree. He crept to the saucer and lapped up the milk. I hoped he would appear next day, but he didn't.

Gilbert White says that beetles are no inconsiderable part of a hedgehog's food, and he speaks of a

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litter of piglets which he procured when they were five days old ; all blind, and yet with such stiff prickles as would have fetched blood had they been carelessly handled. He suggests, not unmindful of the mother's lying-in, that these spines are soft at birth. Hedgehogs cannot roll themselves into a ball till they are full grown. They hibernate, like bears, but apparently make no provision for the winter. Do they suck their paws ?

What is the message of a woodland garden ? What does it whisper to the soft accompaniment of bees humming in the limes and the tinkle of falling water ? I should not ask the writer of a book recently published to answer this question. It is a good book, a vivid presentment of London streets and Londoners. But the author tilts at those who love the country. He speaks of the intellectual loneliness to which the country life condemns a keen and scholarly mind ; he declares, almost impudently and certainly didactically, " that any intelligent man who experiments at settling in the country either goes mouldy, or, after a year, flies back to nature—which is the city ".

Was Izaak Walton unintelligent ? Was Gilbert White mouldy ?

This author, much of whose work I admire, is a Londoner. He can reveal the London he loves, the London of to-day, with clarity. But he seems incapable of understanding the countryman who finds in the country what he himself finds in the town. The lover of the countryside, with intimate knowledge of it, detects interest in what escapes the ordinary eye, and it is essentially intelligent appreciation. It exacts the same powers of observation which a microscopist bestows upon a world imprisoned in a drop of pond water. Because the writer I speak of possesses these

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powers in no common degree he ought to be fairer to the countryman.

A woodland garden, on a July afternoon is *un bois dormant*. On that account I cannot doze in it. I feel the more awake because so many invisible little creatures are having their *siesta*. At such moments I acquire an uncanny detachment from all forms of bodily activity. Is this the blessed state of Nirvana? When George du Maurier published *Peter Ibbetson*, I—and how many others?—made sustained attempts to “dream true”. You had to lie on your back, with hands crossed under your head, and then you “willed” to go in your sleep wherever you wished to go. . . . I believed that the creator of *Peter* could do this; but, long afterwards, Gerald du Maurier assured me that he couldn’t.

In a woodland garden you don’t want to leave it. That is its message. “Stay here awhile,” it says. “I can offer peace. I can charm away care. I am glad you came here alone. Stay as long as you can.”

So I stay till someone comes running to say that I’m wanted on the telephone, with never a lie ready to withstand an importunate demand. As I rush off I hear a sympathetic sighing in the leaves overhead.

Our West country is at its best in July before the holidays, when the inns are swept and garnished against the holiday traffics and excursions, and you are sure, as a first-comer, of a warm welcome.

Let us visit Castle Combe.

It is a joy to take visitors to it, being careful to say nothing about it beforehand. It should be approached from the south. You turn a corner and behold a trout stream. This stream, the Box, flows tranquilly through the lower part of the village. We are now

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in the Cotswolds. Parts of the Mendips and Cotswolds are still undiscovered country. Castle Combe, however, is well known, likely to be too well known in the near future. During the golden age of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the Cotswold people were prosperous. I cannot find, either in the county histories, or in the works of our archæologists, enlightening passages about the builders of cottages. There is no mention of many-acred squires vying with each other in building contests; but there must have been some such friendly rivalry. Nobody knows the names of the humble architects. Probably, the squires accorded them a free hand, and they builded better than they knew. They worked for the love of the working, a tradition of their craft, and they sought, indefatigably, variety of treatment. Our diarists strangely withhold praise. Both Pepys and Evelyn are concerned with persons rather than places. Fielding, Smollett, Miss Austen, Fanny Burney—all acute observers—appear to have been blind to the charm of what was under their noses.

Some of our squires, in love with their own possessions, preserved old buildings as jealously as they preserved game. Others, indifferent to beauty and unable to perceive it, pulled it down and replaced it with ugliness. Washington Irving was one of the first to describe, with a grace worthy of the subject, village charm. After him came Mrs. Gaskell and Miss Mitford, and after them scores of others. We are constrained, however, to remember that even Dickens, who created a new world, was not read by the squirearchy, because the upper classes were not “interested” in the annals of the poor and obscure. They preferred Thackeray. It was a revelation to them when George

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Eliot wrote, with such an immense measure of success, about *Adam Bede* and *Silas Marner*. Apropos—when will George Eliot come into her own again?

As soon as you cross the bridge, low-arched and delightfully buttressed, you begin to ascend the sharp slope of Castle Combe, with its hanging woods above, a perfect background for the many-gabled, many-chimneyed, dormer-windowed houses. You can pause at every step to gladden your eyes. The details of windows, doors, porches, eaves, and the irregularity of roof-line are absorbing. After its fashion Castle Combe is the antithesis of Lacock. The village street is narrow and what the French term “*accidenté*”. Happy chance, not design, determined its character. So great a master as John Wood had to conform fancy to the contours of Bath hills, and here the builders were “cribbed” by the combe.

A combe (from the Anglo-Saxon *cumb*) is a dingle between two hills.

*From those heights
We dropped, at pleasure, into sylvan combs.*

In Scotland combes are spoken of as corries.

Dominating the village stood the castle of the de Dunstanvilles, a feudal fortress, which occupied nine acres of ground. Nothing remains but grass-covered mounds and ditches. The last de Dunstanville, like many of our magnates to-day, abandoned it as too expensive to keep up! The castle was in Norman times a “caput”, or lordship, to which twenty-six manors were subject. The lordship passed to the Scrope family, remaining in their possession for five hundred years. The Scropes, during that long period, produced two earls, twenty barons, one chancellor,

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five knights of the garter, and innumerable knights banneret. The step-father of one Stephen Scrope, was Sir John Fastolf, the prototype of Shakespeare's Falstaff, and, apparently, an unscrupulous and rapacious rogue. He sold his stepson for five hundred marks. Then, later on, he rebought him, "as if," says Stephen pitifully, "I were a beste". He kept him out of the property bequeathed to the boy by his own father for fifty-three years. Was Stephen able to enjoy his possessions when he came into them?

The church, to the building of which in the fifteenth century the rich clothiers subscribed handsomely, was rebuilt seventy years ago. The ancient western tower remains. Within a cockstride stands the Market Cross, with its high-peaked roof and its worn steps. In the sixteenth century the villagers of Castle Combe had plenty of fun. They played a game called "kuffes and tables" shifte-groat (our shove halfpenny), bowls, hand-ball, foot-ball, stave-ball (cricket?), nine holes (golf?), "kittles" (skittles), had bouts of quarter-staff and back-sword play, and danced the jigs of the period. They practised archery and tilted at the quintain. I have read Strutt's ancient *Sports and Pastimes*, grievously disappointed in a book written by a painstaking pedant. Strutt died in 1802, leaving behind him a manuscript romance, entitled *Queen-Hoo Hall*, completed by Sir Walter Scott. I cannot believe that it was a "best seller". I waded through stagnant waters and found no fish to my net. The book might have been delightful; it was dull *à faire frémir*.

In another book written by a Scrope of Castle Combe I enjoyed better angling. The Scopes, as lords of the manor, imposed fines upon villagers who left dung in the street or threw filth into the river. Articles of

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general consumption were supplied to their people of the best quality and at the lowest price. "Ale-house haunting, idling, and the keeping of bad houses" were punished by fine or imprisonment. I chuckled when I learned that parsons were accused and found guilty of poaching. The best beer, honest "stingo", cost fourpence a gallon! No villager could buy bread of a baker without the pale.

Protection—with a vengeance!

Mr. Scrope affirms that Bishop Latimer—the gallant Reformer, who said to his fellow prelate, Ridley, on the scaffold: "Be of good cheer, Master Ridley; we shall this day light such a candle by God's Grace in England as I trust shall never be put out"—preached in the pulpit which still stands in Castle Combe church. His rectory was not far away.

It is easy to repeople this village with Elizabethans, because we are familiar with the costumes worn by Queen Bess and her courtiers. The common people, then as now, aped the lords and ladies. The men had plain doublets with sleeves tied into them by points (laces); in cold weather jumpers and jerkins covered the doublets or hung from the shoulders. Wide breeches were ballooned out with wool, rags, or *bran* above their hose. The country girl copied the fashions of the moment. How did she make butter in a huge ruff? Could she milk a cow if she had beneath her gown an "underprop" of wire?

§ VIII

IMAGINE the scene when the town crier proclaimed from the steps of the Market Cross the defeat of the Spanish Armada. What did *Armada* mean to the

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clothiers, the yeomen, the peasantry of Castle Combe ? The King of Spain, indignant at the singeing of his beard by that " Broom of the Seas ", Sir Francis Drake, had collected, under the command of the Duke of Medina-Sidonia, a fleet well-called " invincible ". Arrayed against a small island, inviolate from invasion since the Norman Conquest, were 130 ships (besides caravels), 3,165 cannon, 8,050 sailors, 2,008 galley slaves, 1,382 noblemen, gentlemen and their attendants, and 150 monks, headed by Martin Alvarco, the Vicar of the Inquisition. All England knew what the devil-doms of Spain were in the hands of the " Inquisition Dogs " ; all England knew what forces we could muster. We had 80 *vessels* under the command of Lord Charles Howard, Sir Francis Drake and Sir John Hawkins. David confronted Goliath.

On the 29th of July, 1588, we sunk (or dispersed) this mighty fleet ! And the glorious news sped from Land's End to Carlisle.

Picture to yourself the *mafficking* that followed. I can see the town-crier gulping down the best sack in the Scrope cellars ; and you may wager that the thirst of every thirsty soul in the parish was slaked at the expense of the lord of the manor. Spirits were not drunk in Elizabeth's reign. Ale for breakfast—so Monsieur André Simon (a high authority) says—beer for dinner, and wine in the evening were drunk by all but the poorest throughout the land. Wine was ridiculously cheap. In that day only Vintners, licensed taverners, and peers of the realm were allowed to keep wine in their cellars. They drank Graves, Bordeaux, Malligo, Orliance, Sherry, Malmsey, Aligante, and Canary—great stoups of them ! Spenser may have been thinking of Armada night when he wrote :

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*Poure out the wine without restraint or stay,
Poure not by cups, but by the belly-full,
Poure out to all that wull. . . .*

Of course the lads of the village "bussed" the wenches. Stout godly matrons hitched up skirts and danced the *cancan* of Tudor revels! Every man, woman and child cursed the Dons; every glutton licked his lips at thought of the morrow's gormandizing; nobody dared to go to bed. Did the parson lift a restraining hand? I trow not. Even he held his sides, laughing at Rabelaisian japes and jests. In Castle Combe that night there must have been some sailor who had sailed the Spanish Main. The village maids would make such a hero of him as the maids of Denver made of Richard Hobson, when Dewey sank another Spanish fleet, and Hobson, Captain of the *Merrimac*, was dubbed hero of the *merry smack*, because two hundred and fifty girls embraced him as a *praemium virtutis et valoris*. Yes, I see plainly this ancient mariner. And, Mr. Gregory Harris, a Devonian, has put the right words into verse concerning him and his like:

*With Drake, to Nombre de Dios, Cap'n Oxenham did sail,
In search o' Spanish treasure, long ago;
For Dem'shur seamen were the chaps to make the Spaniards quail
An' "scat 'em all to sherds"—ezactly zo!*

*An' still by Tamar an' by Dart, us holds their mem'ry dear,
(Their galliots an' their friggats crammed wi' gold);
An' think of how they swept the seas, an' kep the tideways clear
In those gurt, glorious, spacious days of old!*

Perhaps there happened to be in Castle Combe a sweet singer, who took his lute or rebeck, and warbled a love-ditty. How clamorously those who, throughout two long months had walked about their daily busi-

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ness in terror of the devilish Dons, must have applauded him! The lord of the manor and the parson had made plain to the meanest intelligence the edge and temper of the blade that menaced the peace of England.

We have an Armistice Day. Why shouldn't we honour the August Bank Holiday by calling it Armada Day?

§ IX

I NAME a few villages: Freshford, Farley-Hungerford, Selworthy, Winscombe, Dulverton and Dunster. The railroad runs between Freshford and the Avon, but you need not look at it, or, if you do, think what beauty has been revealed to those who can afford a third-class ticket. As an original member of the *Titmarsh Club* I made a pilgrimage to Clevedon Court, the "Castlewood" of *Esmond*. I saw the oak staircase down which tripped Mistress Beatrix, and wandered through chambers where fair women slept during the reign of that unhappy monarch, Edward II. Sir Ambrose Elton, my host, showed me a collection of magnificent pottery, the work of his father's hand. Two men, and they alone, knew the secret of the gold and silver glaze so cunningly laid upon the earthenware. Sir Edmund Elton died, and within a few days his master-potter died also. Miss Jekyll, in her *Wall and Water Gardens*, gives two illustrations of the terraces at Clevedon Court, which have much in common with the terraces at St. Catharine's: ground rising sharply above the house, yew hedges of great age, hanging woods beyond—a galaxy of charms.

In August we shall cross the border into Gloucestershire. But this is not a guide-book, merely an *aide-mémoire*. Guide-books are necessary evils; what is

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not found in them you can dig out of the "gramfers": corroborative details, quaint conceits, sly irrelevancies. Our problem of unemployment might be solved if village industries could be re-established, such as chair-making, straw-plaiting, and fancy thatching (almost a lost art out of Wiltshire). Needle-work is holding its own, but it needs technical instruction, hard to come by. The mothers of young girls tell me that domestic service is less disdained than it was ten years ago, although class distinctions remain rampant amongst those who use the expression "no class". A young man serving behind a counter refuses to walk out with a pretty serving-maid!

The "Pretty Maid" ceremony, still held at Holsworthy in North Devon, closes this chapter. It takes place at the door of the Parish Church. A young "damozel" is selected by her school-fellows as being the prettiest, the most diligent, and the best behaved of her year. Mr. Gregory Harris describes her:

*A charmin' young Damzel—her name it was "Graace",
Was all dressed in pale blue, wi' a smile 'pon her vaace,
An' Passon—he gie'd out the tarms of the will,—
(Twas proved in the "thirties", an' holdeth gude still).—
He stated the tarms to be strictly obeyed,
In choosing the quietest, purtiest maid,—
"A present o' gold, vor to buy a new gown,
Vor the vittiest spinster in Hol'sery Town!"*

*An' there the maid stood—her was purty—iss fay!
An' her blished like a rose at the things they did say;
There was hunderds o' people in vront, an' around,
No wonder poor Graace kept a-looking to ground.
The "Passon" an' "Jistics" praised her up well,
Their illoquence caused all our buzzums to swell;
Aw, iss—it was grand,—I was proud to be there,
Wi' the purtiest maiden to Hol'sery Vair!*

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§ 1

FIRST of August—Lammas Day.

Lammastide, to my brother, is a synonym for Hollyhocks, Dahlias, Gladioli, Phloxes, and, later on, the flaming “red-hot poker”, which I refuse to salute under the label *Tritoma*. Masses of gay blooms warm our aged hearts at this season of the year.

Masses——!

I smile inwardly when Jack and Jill, recently married, tell me that it is going to be such fun making a garden. Fun it is—up to a point. And then the joys of anticipation are tempered when we survey sadly—results! The day dawns, too soon, when Jill murmurs: “You know, I hate to admit it, but there is something wrong somewhere.” Generally there is something wrong everywhere, but it would be heartless to say so. Jill, possibly, is aware that there was something wrong somewhere about her first big party to which she invited her friends without pausing to reflect that some were hardly on nodding terms with others. One year we sowed “masses” of red poppies! To-day, if you mention red poppies to my brother, he makes inarticulate noises. He is now singing in his bath, because that tall, majestic, resplendent lily, well-named *Auratum*, has found its spiritual home on the

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lee side of our hollyhocks, which shelter it from southwest blasts, and, incidentally, share with it a much enriched soil.

My beloved has gone down into his garden to gather lilies.

I am not referring to my brother, but to a line out of the Canticles. Lilies—always excepting lilies of the valley—ought not to be gathered. The *Madonna* lily, symbol of purity, is placed on altars, but, in a drawing-room, the golden beauty looks—and I am sure feels—unhappy. So we leave her with the hollyhocks.

Why do some novelists introduce hollyhocks at the wrong time of the year? It appears to be impossible to describe a village garden in May without “featuring” hollyhocks as if they were hardy annuals blooming everlastingly. All novelists slip up now and again, partly through carelessness, generally through ignorance. Titles—which could be mastered in ten minutes—are misapplied by people who ought to know better. The wife of the wicked baronet is spoken of as Lady Mary, although her father is a commoner. Younger sons of dukes, because they bear a courtesy title, are described as peers of the realm. I asked a clever woman why she had made such a blunder, and she replied: “Does it matter?” I answered indiscreetly perhaps: “If you are writing for readers who have never met a peer, it doesn’t.” A doctor told me that he disliked novels because disease was so maltreated.

The nice arrangement of flowers is a fine art. Any house (or palace), with flowers dotted about indiscriminately, offends the critical eye. A rich fool can grow or buy the costliest blooms, but their right disposition is given to few. Flowers in a room are an adjunct. Forty years ago it was the mode to plaster

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diamond trinkets upon the corsage of an evening gown, a Victorian fashion denounced as bad taste. To-day, many ladies, defeating their own ends, make a flower-show of their drawing-rooms. The justification is absence of anything else worth looking at, including the lady herself. A gentlewoman of my acquaintance, a genius for such accessory decoration, suggests that two set-pieces are enough for a large room. She disdains bowls, glass trumpets, and vases. The village carpenter, under her instruction, makes wooden stands holding three tiers of glass jars of varying heights. The cost of such stands is negligible, and they are painted black, dark-blue, bottle-green, or lacquered. *The stand is not visible.* When I asked for a rule of thumb, she laughed. "I don't want my flowers to hit my visitors in the eye. And I like to provoke the illusion that they are still growing, not cut off in their prime with a ruthless pair of shears. It pleases me when they are not noticed too quickly, but arrest attention, and hold it, later on. As you see I am faithful to one colour scheme at a time. There are four varieties of blue delphiniums in that stand. I take the flowers of the moment which are at their best in the garden. The arrangement depends upon the law of proportion. Form is as important as colour. I permit myself one rose on my writing-table, no more."

§ II

JULIET CAPULET was born on Lammas Eve. Pitiful to think that she died before she was fifteen. Her name should be bestowed upon the loveliest flower that blooms for the briefest period, and how

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gardeners would wrangle over which flower, out of so many ephemeral beauties, is entitled to pride of place ! I wish I had asked that great Shakespearean scholar, Professor George Saintsbury, if, in his opinion, a happy ending to the tragedy could have been achieved ?

Lammas, Candlemas and Martinmas were once quarter days on which rent was paid. New wheat is still called Lammas wheat. It was customary to give money to servants on Lammas Day to buy gloves, worn, presumably, when they waited at table. In Exeter an immense glove, at Lammas Fair, was stuffed and carried through the city on a long pole decorated with ribbons and flowers to be placed finally upon the top of the Guildhall. Gloves used to be given at Easter. White gloves are still bestowed upon judges holding a maiden assize. It is bad luck to pick up a glove in the street ; unless you return it to the lady who has purposely dropped it. Any young man, at first sight of the new moon, was privileged to kiss the girl of his choice and demand from her a pair of new gloves. I fear that too often he received a box on the ear. I recall a story of a lady who presented a pair of gloves to Sir Thomas More containing forty angels (twenty pounds), in gratitude because he had decreed a case in her favour. "Madame," said the chancellor, "it would be against good manners to refuse a New Year's gift. I accept the gloves ; their *lining* you will be pleased otherwise to bestow." The use of gloves is of high antiquity, although they are not mentioned in the Bible, save for the instance where the canny Jacob covered his hands with skins. The ancient Persians wore them habitually. They were found upon the hands of King John and Edward I, when their tombs were opened towards the close of

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the eighteenth century. They became a gage of combat, and the token of a fair lady's favour, when knights were bold. The Glovers' Company of London received its armorial bearings in 1464.

§ III

HOW many of us read the Chap-books ? They are not too easy to secure as bargains in second-hand book-shops ; but they were dear to villagers less than a hundred years since, and are mines of forgotten information. I have beguiled an hour in the company of one Dougal Graham, the author of *Penny Histories*, which might be called *Tracts for the Times*, or *Sketches of Country Life and Manners*. Dougal was a canny Scot, with more than his share of wit and humour (according to Sir Walter Scott), and became in due time bellman to the city of Glasgow, a position which gave him opportunities for advertising his wares. Both in England and Scotland Chap-books circulated amongst the peasantry, and kept alive fairy stories and legends, which is why I mention them here. A history of the Bible was published in penny parts, admirably done. When Dougal Graham died the following quatrain, from the pen of an unknown admirer, appeared :

*Of witty jokes he had such store,
Johnson could not have pleased you more ;
Or, with loud laughter, made you roar
As he could do ;
He still had something ne'er before
Exposed to view.*

Some of his japes are not for queasy stomachs ; he achieved popularity, very much as Rabelais did, by

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tickling the humour of his readers and disseminating entertaining knowledge. He is described as "a curious, little, witty fellow, with a round face and broad nose". In our West Country we had just such another in the person of Bamfylde Moore Carew, known in Somerset as king of the mendicants. Carew was the son of a clergyman in Devon and born in 1693, "tall and majestic, limbs strong and well-proportioned, features regular, and his countenance open and ingenuous". He joined the gypsies and became a nomad, a beloved vagabond. Reading about him I wondered whether Ouida, before she wrote *Pascarel* and *Tricotrin*, had ever heard of this gentleman. If my friend, the late William Locke, were alive I should like to ask him if Berzélius Nibbidard Paragot was modelled upon Bamfylde Moore Carew? I make no doubt that we should never have had *The Cruise of the Cachelot* if Herman Melville had not written *Moby Dick*.

Glancing at my Chap-books, chuckling over them, I found myself speculating upon the causes which make for popularity in literature whether it be good, bad or indifferent; a theme of interest to novices rather than veterans like myself, and I assume that the novice who wishes to earn a living with his pen has purged his mind of the cant that it is inartistic to consider what cash he gets for his job. If he can't make it "pay", the sooner he is quit of it the better; if he doesn't study his own market he is an ass. The Waverley Novels were written beneath the spur of necessity. The quaker's advice to his son: "Don't marry money, but go where money is" is applicable to the profession of literature and illiterature. In fine, take your wares to the right market, or, better still, let your agent do this for you. Then, if there

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is dirty work to be done in the way of haggling, he will do it. I have come to the conclusion that, with rare exceptions, the work of our younger writers is lamentably lacking in charm. Life, at the moment, has become difficult for gentle and simple alike. Let us accept conditions as they are and not make the worst of them. Moaning and self-pity won't solve problems, and any presentation of life which lays undue stress upon the weevils in the wood, rather than the fibre of the wood, is a disservice to humanity and commonsense.

Weevils in the Wood ought to be the title of a novel, recently published. Some of our critics praised it. These gentlemen assume a grave responsibility when they commend outstanding technical ability and sanction (by their silence) offences against good taste and common decency. Decency may have become uncommon, but I refuse to believe it.

In this novel the protagonist is a man of the people, a capable craftsman, something of an *Adam Bede* in his way. We meet him on his wedding-day—poor, but honest, we take leave of him rich beyond the dreams of *his* avarice, with a dead wife in his arms, driven senile by misfortune and crooning a hymn——! The story of his married life is told at length with unnecessary corroborative detail. A midwife, one of the best characters in the novel, is so obstetrically outspoken in her cosy chats about confinements that nothing whatever is left to the imagination of the reader. A salacious incident between a weevil of a servant maid and a small boy is lugged in to justify the adjective “daring” as bestowed upon the writer. He introduces other bedchamber “happenings”, treading in the footsteps of another brilliant offender who

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has certainly made good his claim to be a Privy Councillor.

Now why is this poor devil bludgeoned so unmercifully? According to his lights, farthing dips no doubt, he does his duty. As a reward his Creator sees to it that he is flayed alive. His wife, after the fourth child is born, ceases to be his wife. He is told that another baby will be too much for her. She repays marital abstentions by presenting him with twins fathered by his best friend under conditions ludicrously unconvincing. He accepts this extra paternity, and, as a compensation, a seventh child (another weevil) is added to his quiver without any of the ill effects so confidently predicted by the family practitioner! He provides generously for the future of these seven children. An epidemic of diphtheria removes two of them, but not the twins. They reach manhood and are killed in the war. Meanwhile his own son goes into the local bank; and at the moment when the mayoralty is offered to the father misappropriates some two hundred pounds. This weevil is not prosecuted; he disappears to reappear later as a successful seller of Australian wines, although he had objected to going into the bank on the plea that he loathed business. The elder girl, the pick of the pottle, loses her lover and marries a man whom she follows to Australia. The weevil, spoken of as the "child of forgiveness", becomes the mistress of a doctor and—despite a handsome settlement—joins the lost legion of the unfortunates. She is opportunely killed in a motor smash. The weevil of a wife reads Maurice Hewlett's *Forest Lovers* several times and then puts her head into a gas oven!

This *dénouement* brought to mind a story told towards

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the close of the war. A woman in the humblest circumstances was alone with two children in her bedroom when she heard the sharp rat-tat of the postman below. She was bathing her baby at the moment, so she told the elder child to get the letter which might contain reassuring news from her husband fighting in France. The child obeyed. A second later there was an ominous crash. The distracted mother laid the baby in the chair and hurried out to find her child senseless at the foot of the stairs. Upon the mat beside the front door lay a telegram. The mother picked up the child. It had broken its neck. She carried it upstairs, where, during her short absence, the baby had fallen out of the chair into the bath and was drowned. Later, she read the telegram: her husband had been killed in action. *She put her head into a gas oven.*

The verdict at the Garrick Club was that this Grand Guignol yarn presented itself as either too horribly true to be good or too horribly good to be true.

That is how I feel about this novel. The author seems to have jotted down everything revolting which came under his notice and then plastered the nauseating mass upon the head of one man. This is not realism but the *technique* of the successful writer of thrillers who, tongue in cheek, is unconcerned with credibility. Such a man might exclaim: "It is up to me to go one better than Edgar Wallace." The writer of this novel piles agony upon agony. Why is his performance applauded?

I shall try to answer the question. A good workman appreciates good workmanship. This novel is admirably constructed. It is "alive", palpitatingly

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so. It is arresting. I read it from cover to cover. But it left a sickening taste in my mouth. I should hate to read it again, or to commend it to a friend. Finally I muttered to myself : " Oh, the pity of it ! Here is authentic talent buried in a midden."

I can hear the voice of the pessimist raised querulously : " Does this fellow think that all novels should leave a sugary taste in the mouth of the reader when he lays them down ? " No, my dear sir, most emphatically I do not think so. Some of the war novels revealed the abominations of warfare. And it was good for us to read revolting details. Novels concerned with the seamier side of life serve their ends in like manner. But I submit that if we are to be harrowed and tormented by the tribulations of others, it is all important that the author should apportion light and shade. If he fails to do this, his work is not *realism*. I have wandered once more down a bypath, because I feel so strongly that in these dark days every true lover of England should fight tooth and talon against the Giant Despair, who seems to have so many of our younger writers by the throat. Their message appears to be : coagulated misery here and no hope of a hereafter !

§ IV

IN August the Cotswolds and Gloucestershire will be free from the hordes of holiday-makers who descend, like hungry locusts, upon our southern seaboard. The lover of rural England might spend a month in that pleasant city of gardens and retired Colonels—Cheltenham. He need not take the waters, warned by the epitaph familiar to my generation :

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*Here lie I, and my three daughters,
Killed by drinking the Cheltenham waters.
If we had stuck to Epsom salts,
We shouldn't be lying in these here vaults.*

From Cheltenham, where board and lodging is good, the pilgrim can wander into a paradise too little known and the more enchanting on that account. I have to name certain villages, but I do so regretfully. It would be an amusing experiment to discard guide-books and start out—north, south, east or west—with the determination to find, as the Argonauts did, the golden apples most likely to tickle the palate. The ripe pippins are ours for the plucking. The itch to reach a given destination must be scratched out of mind. This applies to Gloucestershire in particular, because it is a county of surprises, so rich in quaint manor-houses snuggling out of sight of the highways, so teeming, if you travel the by-ways, with hamlets whose names are hardly known a dozen miles away. At every turn of the meandering lanes, in every dip of the hills you discover what Constable and the elder Crome loved and painted: a water-splash, a millrace, a quiet pool beneath the shade of the elms, a trout stream, and almost everywhere the peace denied to urban dwellers. In the fields the harvesters may be at work. On the green hills the sheep are grazing. This is the England which comes back to the exile when he is far from Arcadia. You expect to see a smock-frock, but, lack-a-day, you don't. As compensation you hear the creak of the heavily-laden wains and the cheering cries of the wagoners; and you smell that warm, aromatic fragrance which precedes the sweet fall of the year.

If you linger at Stow-on-the-Wold you will linger

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longer at Bourton-on-the-Water. I spent happy days there, not to mention ambrosial nights, in a Georgian house, whence I could wander at will with a scholarly host who could answer every question I cared to ask. I think I pleased him when I said that I preferred Bourton-on-the-Water to the much more famous Broadway, where, too captiously perhaps, I detect "window-dressing". Broadway is a thought too enamoured of its own perfections.

The water at Bourton is a silvery trout stream, beloved of the dry-fly fisherman. This stream, with its ancient bridges, flows through the main street, which is wide ; and the houses on each side invite a beauty competition of which I should shrink from being the judge. Agricultural depression has not spared the Cotswolds, but Bourton-on-the-Water displays no outward signs of it.

The church, dedicated to St. Lawrence, was rebuilt when English taste in ecclesiastical architecture was at its lowest ebb. Some wit remarked that St. Lawrence, surveying this execrable pseudo-Gothic fake, must have felt that he was back on the gridiron ! Alban Butler would retort that the Saint suffered no pain on the gridiron. On the contrary : his face appeared to be surrounded with extraordinary light ; his body exhaled a sweet agreeable smell, and he remarked to a Roman prefect standing by : " Let my body now be turned ; one side is broiled enough."

Many ancient fonts may be found in Gloucestershire ; some of stone (oolite), some of lead. There are, I believe, only thirty leaden fonts in England, nine are in this one county.

I forbear to mention the stately houses because so much has been written about them. But they no

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longer allure me as they did. Partly, perhaps, because so many have been "restored". Restoration leaves little to the imagination.

Personally I prefer to speculate upon the romance that lurks beneath stone-tiled roofs and behind latticed windows of cottages and farm-houses. Life in these has changed but little.

Of the innumerable gentlemen who have written about our villages of recent years I would assign pride of place to the late Rev. Peter Ditchfield. His *Charm of the English Village* deserves to be a classic. He quotes Ruskin happily :

" Watch an old building with anxious care ; guard it as best you may, and, at any cost, from any influence of dilapidation. Count its stones as you would the jewels of a crown. Set watchers about it, as if at the gate of a besieged city ; bind it together with iron when it loosens ; stay it with timber when it declines. Do not care about the unsightliness of the aid—better a crutch than a lost limb ; and do this tenderly and reverently and continually, and many a generation will still be born and pass away beneath its shadow."

What would Stalin do with these Cotswold villages ? Ever since Lady Astor and George Bernard Shaw—those Innocents Abroad, as Winston Churchill dubbed them—returned from a personally conducted tour in Russia, I have been reading about conditions in the Republic of Soviets. But, obviously, presentment of fact is placed on the Index by the pontiffs of our Labour Party. When I talk with members of that party living in Bath I am told that I have been misinformed. When I ask for their information, they haven't any ; they believe what they want to believe. It is time, I suggest, that some patriotic gentleman should do what that true lover of England, Sir Arthur

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Conan Doyle, did after the Boer War, when he tackled and refuted the calumnies spread about our soldiers in nearly every country in the world. Cannot the twelve latest books upon conditions in Russia be collated and boiled down into a pamphlet which could be placed in the hands of every voter in the kingdom. Then our Reds might realize that the greatest experiment in Communism has failed, like previous experiments upon similar lines, ludicrously.

§ v

*Bourton-on-the-Water,
That's next door to Slaughter.*

UPPER and Lower Slaughter—the name was taken from a family that flourished here for three centuries—are delightful villages, delightfully watered, with an air of peace and prosperity which may be—I devoutly hope not—counterfeit presentments.

Burford was the first place in England to receive the privilege of a merchant guild. Burford Priory is especially interesting to me because it was once owned by Sir Lawrence Tanfield, whose kinswoman, Ann, married one of my ancestors. In Burford, on an ancient document, you can see the signature of Warwick, the Kingmaker.

*O broad and smooth the Avon flows
By Stratford's many piers ;
And Shakespeare lies by Avon side
These thrice a hundred years.
But I would be where Windrush sweet
Laves Burford's lovely hill,
The grey old town on the lonely down
Is where I would be still.*

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If my pilgrim travels to Winchcomb, let him pause at Prestbury, a village that refused to be made a town. The relics of Kenelm, King and Saint, were deposited at Winchcomb. The saint, when he was seven years old, was murdered by a wicked aunt (some say his sister), and his body and decapitated head were buried under a thorn. The corpse was exhumed, because a heavenly light shone about the thorn, but Alban Butler gives another legend. A dove flew into St. Peter's at Rome and laid on the high altar a letter written in English, and read by an Englishman. Thus news came to the Pope that the little king had been foully murdered. Alban Butler disregards the local legend: On the spot where his body rested on its way to Winchcomb a spring of limpid water gushed forth which flows to this day. Somewhere near Winchcomb I recall a chimney-stack with a sheep, the symbol of Cotswold prosperity, carved upon it.

§ VI

“**A**S sure as God's in Gloucestershire” is an allusion to the relic of Christ's blood preserved at Hailes Abbey, near Winchcomb. The less pious interpret it as an indication of fertility of soil. Lean cites a Berkeley MSS. :

“ In the body of this hundred (Berkeley) are observed three steps or degrees, obvious to every observer : the first from the channels of the Severn half-way towards the hills, which hath wealth without health ; the second from thence towards the tops of those hills which hath wealth and health ; and the third step or degree, from thenceforward called the Weald or Cotsall part, affordeth health in that sharp air, but less wealth, into the best whereof the merciful goodness of Almighty God hath cast my lot beyond my hopes or desires.”

This was England

Gilbert White might have penned this passage about his beloved Selborne. There is another tag:

Happy is the eye

That dwelleth 'twixt Severn and Wye.

I am suffering from an exacerbation common to all who tabulate information. Memory takes malicious pleasure in confounding the man with a notebook. "If you don't trust me," she says, "I'll play pranks on you." I have a note to the effect that adders are never found near an ash-tree. I failed to set down where this came from, but I think from Gloucestershire. Possibly from Brusher Mills, collector of New Forest vipers. Can anybody tell me whether or not truth supports the statement? Brusher Mills maintained that adders' fat (which he sold) mitigated the ill effects of the bite. There is an extraordinary superstition—which again I can't place—that the skin of an adder hung up in a chimney corner is a preservative against fire. Are young ladies, who wear lizard-skin shoes, less inflammable than those shod with common leather? I have another note about "proud" Painswick, built horizontally upon a hill. A guide-book mentions that there are one hundred yews in the churchyard. My note-book gives the number as ninety-nine. A sexton told my brother that it was impossible to grow the round hundred. He appealed to the landlord of the inn who confirmed the story. A yew might be planted. If it flourished, one of the older trees died. The churchyard, in fine, offers hospitality to ninety-nine yews—and no more. It used to be said that Painswick inhabitants were in an unhappy predicament: some were so poor that they could not live, while the air of the Cotswolds is so healthy that they cannot die.

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§ VII

*Apple pie without cheese
Is like a kiss without a squeeze.*

GLOUCESTER cheese, especially the double variety, is quite good enough by itself. Instead of apple pie give me a crusty loaf, hot from the oven, honest butter, and a tankard of ale not too small, a meal easy to come by in any roadside tavern in the Cotswolds. Upon May Day, in the village of Randwick, near Stroud, at daybreak, three cheeses—weighing thirty-three pounds apiece—were carried upon a litter, festooned and garlanded with blossoms, down to the churchyard, and rolled thrice round the church. They were then borne back in triumphal procession to be cut up on the village green and distributed among the bystanders. A jolly custom, better worth reviving than indifferent morris-dancing! Another custom of giving the first slice of cheese, after a child is born, to the unmarried women in the house so that they may sleep over it in order to assure fecundity when they marry, might, in these days of over-population, be left obsolescent.

A dish of boiled cheese, not a rarebit, is too often wrecked in the cooking, provoking dyspepsia and melancholia. I part with a recipe which I regard as an heirloom in the family. But please insist, Madam, that the directions are faithfully carried out.

Place in a saucepan half a pound of Cheddar or Gloucester cheese sliced very thin, add a gill of rich cream, two eggs and the yolk only of a third egg, with a dash of red pepper, salt and one mustard-spoonful of mustard. Stir without stopping over a

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slow clear fire till the whole is smooth and free from lumps. Serve piping hot, with toast. The best port in your cellar is not too good to accompany this.

The pastures which produce the best Gloucester cheese are on the clays, heavy going for a fox-hunter during a wet winter. The highest point in the county is Cleeve Hill, 1,134 feet above sea-level, near Prestbury. The view from the summit is said to be panoramic, but on each occasion when I have climbed the hill, soft mists have obscured visibility. I complained, as a stranger will, to my hostess, who replied: "I live within ten miles of Cleeve Hill, and I have been no more lucky than you." Only a churl would abuse these mists, because, particularly in early morning, they bestow their benison on the landscape, obscuring what is bleak, veiling what may be ugly, and challenging the stranger to explore the loveliness which he knows to be there.

The Forest of Dean lies between Severn and Wye. The Severn is here an arm of the Bristol Channel; the Wye is an enchanting river.

*O Sylvan Wye! thou wanderer through the woods,
How often has my spirit turned to thee!*

If you wish to see the Forest of Dean at its best, go there in August, and stay at the *Speech House*. Like the New Forest it is ruled by its verderers. Beneath it lie coal and iron. Evelyn speaks of a great hurricane which "prostrated thousands of goodly oaks, laying them in ghastly posture, like regiments fallen in battle by the sword of the conqueror". Here the Conqueror hunted the wild boar, in 1069, when news came to him of a revolt in Northumbria. He swore "by the splendour of the Almighty" that not a rebel

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should remain alive. Edward the Confessor shod his horses with Forest of Dean iron. Many of the ships which sailed the Spanish Main were built of Dean oak. This incomparable "reservation" is even more lovely than the Forest of Fontainebleau. The roads passing through it were made by the Romans. It remains a sanctuary and a solitude.

Tintern Abbey is hard by, and the famous Symond's Yat, a bold rock overhanging Wye rapids, set in a gorge even more gorgeous than that of Cheddar. I asked in vain for authentic information about Symond. Who was he? Possibly an unfortunate drowned in the arrowy Wye. The pilgrim will, of course, visit the ruins of Saint Briavel's Castle. Alban Butler never mentions Briavel, a corruption probably of another name. Here are earthworks. Again no archæologist, so far as I know, can say authoritatively when or by whom they were thrown up. The castle was the last of a long line of bastions built by the Lords of the Marshes against the Welsh.

A Whitsuntide custom survived till recently at St. Briavel's. Every householder in the parish paid a penny wherewith to buy bits of stale bread and hard cheese, which were carried into the church in baskets. After the service the congregation pelted each other with these missiles, not sparing the preacher of the day! In 1857 this chuck-cheesing took place in the churchyard instead of the church; Rudder, in his *County History*, states that the custom carried with it the right to cut wood. What began as a ritual, the distribution of food in church, ended in a carnival of disorder. At Chadworth, not far away, the villagers hunted badgers on Good Friday. The badger was associated in some way with Judas Iscariot!

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Wordsworth has expressed the charm of this corner of Gloucester bordered by the Wye.

. . . *Once again I see
These hedge-rows, hardly hedge-rows, little lines
Of sportive wood run wild ; these pastoral farms,
Green to the very door ; and wreaths of smoke
Sent up, in silence, from among the trees !
With some uncertain notice, as might seem
Of vagrant dwellers in the houseless woods,
Or, of some Hermit's cave, where by his fire
The Hermit sits alone.*

Delving into the *Transactions of the Gloucester Archæological Society* I found certain customs familiar to us assigned to the ancient Britons. To wit : throwing a shoe after the bride when she leaves her parental roof ; making April Fools of your neighbours ; May-pole dancing ; and the origin of our word "honey-moon", so called because of the Celtic custom of drinking a beverage made of honey (mead ?) for thirty days after a wedding. The ancient Britons placed flowers on graves. The wedding-cake, before the Romans came, was cut up and distributed among the guests, under the belief that every unmarried man and woman would that same night be vouchsafed a vision of their future mate.

I promised myself, when I set about this book, to avoid as much as possible beaten tracks, to shun "patter" of guide-books, to suggest rather than describe the elusive charm of untrodden ways. I can plead in excuse of failure to achieve my ends the enormous amount of material that confronts me. Selection is swamped, bogged down. However, it is consoling to reflect that the judicious reader can skip tedious passages, as lightheartedly as I myself have

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turned over dry-as-dust pages in at least five hundred books. Such work can be compared with salmon-fishing when the river is out of order. One flogs away——! Perhaps, after eight hours of back-grinding work one “gets into” a good fish, clean run from the sea. And, even then *salmo salar* may break you and escape!

I am moaning because I cannot linger in the Forest of Dean. It is about a fifth the size of the New Forest.

§ VIII

HIS GRACE OF GLOUCESTERSHIRE is still the Grand Duke of Cricket, destined to become a mythical personage like King Arthur of the Round Table. I read his life not long ago in a house where I found several hundred books dealing with the national game and its exponents. *Cricketiana!* There must be millions still alive who cannot hear the august name without experiencing a thrill. Hardly was he breeched, when he was “entered” to ball and bat. He played for England when he was sixteen! He owed much, as he admits, to the indefatigable coaching of his father and elder brother, E. M., the finest point that ever stood close in to fast bowling and held the leather as it flew from the willow. I smacked my lips over an anecdote, relevant here, because it indicates a lusty spirit of the past which may animate the future, the spirit of the West so dear to Charles Kingsley. Some impudent fellow had suggested that E. M. neglected his duties as Coroner of Gloucester, preferring cricket to corpses. E. M. was batting when he heard that his traducer was among the spectators.

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Regardless of the Medean laws of the pitch, the batsman, brandishing his bat, abandoned the wicket in quest of the offender. Having chivied him off the ground, E. M. returned to the popping crease and continued, amidst loud applause, his innings.

With this inspiring example in mind, I suggest that traducers of England should be chivied out of the country. Public opinion would applaud such good hunting. I am not too old to join in the chase. Let our Secret Service find out the names of traitors in the pay of our enemies. Post these names in every parish and lovers of England would see to it that the miscreants were driven, like the swine of Gadara, into the sea.

§ IX

SWALLOWS are preparing to leave us. How I hate to see them go! Aerial Sprites! They leave us because their food supply fails, not on account of our winter, as Bewicke points out. If a farmer shoots a swallow, his cows will give tainted milk. It has been estimated that a swallow flies about three hundred miles each day. Till recently people believed that swallows hibernated under water! It is true that they have often been found in a torpid state. I have watched them circling round the tower of the old church near us, but it is said that they never enter any consecrated building. Southey assigns a reason for this. A swallow defiled the head of Egbert, bishop of Treves, when he was performing mass at the high altar of St. Peter's Church, upon which the indignant prelate laid a curse upon the whole tribe, that if any one should enter a church it should immediately die.

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Southey has a comical passage, taken from a sermon on the Resurrection of one John Gregorie :

“ It is true of the swallow by a certain and confest experience, that when the winter cometh they lie down in a hollow of a tree, and there falling asleep quietly resolve into their first principles ; but, at the Spring’s approach, they are not so dead, but that they hear the still small voice of returning Nature, and, awakened out of their mass, rise up every one to their life again.”

One myth about the swallow comes from France. The man who allows the wedding ring, which he hopes to place upon the finger of his bride, to remain for nine days in a swallow’s nest is assured of his future wife’s fidelity so long as they both shall live.

Au revoir, chère hirondelle, et bon voyage !

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§ I

POSSIBLY the most charming month of all.

St. Partridge has, I fear, "put to bed" St. Giles, the patron saint of beggars, who gave his coat to a sick man entreating alms of him. The garment cured the disorder. Giles was also the patron saint of cripples. He flourished *circa* A.D. 740, dying in the odour of sanctity in 750. He was wounded by an arrow from a royal huntsman's bow. The king of France fell on his knees and entreated forgiveness. But the saint refused first aid, because he desired to suffer pain, so he remained a cripple for the rest of his days. The king built a monastery to commemorate this incident and made Giles abbot thereof. Our church of St. Giles, Cripplegate, is dedicated to him. A company of "aungelles" carried "the soule of hym into heaven".

How many of our beggars acclaim Giles as their saint? I must ask the first I happen to meet. Perhaps the writers of begging-letters invoke his good offices before setting pen to paper. Hardly a week passes without my receiving one or two of these artful epistles. I wish that I had kept some with a view to publication: "How to write Begging Letters". Does anybody, outside the close corporation, know what income tax is paid by the more successful prac-

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tioners? Occasionally, being human, they make mistakes. One came under my notice this month. A letter from an old servant was received by my daughter entreating a grant-in-aid on the plea that the writer's purse with her husband's weekly wages in it had been stolen. My daughter mentioned this loss to another member of the family who had received *some time before* a similar letter from the same hand. Such experiences are humorous, but they turn sour the milk of human kindness. My daughter says that she will not be "had" again; she's too optimistic. We are all "had" again and again; because one case out of a hundred may be deserving of help. Still, begging-letter writers ought to keep a day-book, and not trust to memory. I was implored to send a few pounds to help bury an old schoolfellow. I sent them. Two years later that same old schoolfellow—who had *not* been at Harrow in my time, as I discovered afterwards—rose from the dead to bespeak further assistance! However, I made a short story out of his importunity and recouped myself. Did my old schoolfellow, who had written so movingly of "days of fresh air in the wind and the sun" read that story? I shall never know.

Some beggars are accomplished comedians. One artiste earned what he got out of me. Accosting me outside this house he asked if he might have the honour of shaking my hand, mentioning that he had read many of my novels. I had not the heart to reply, as Israel Zangwill did: "Sir, I would sooner hear that you had bought *one*", so I put out my hand which he grasped reverentially and held in a pinguiclad clasp, gazing deep into my eyes. Then he murmured in broken accents: "Thank you." He turned to go.

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I ought to have let him go—a fitting Roland for his Oliver. He appeared to be a veteran of the Broken Brigade. Indiscreetly I asked the question: "Tell me something about yourself." He shook his head. I insisted on speech. He gave sorrow words. *He got sorrow across!* And yet I "nosed" the art that failed to conceal art. I was "had". Within half an hour my brother joined me on our terrace. He had been "diddled" by the same comic-tragedian—and in the same way. His hand had been retained in a moist, fervent clasp; he had encountered the same soul-searching gaze; he, too, had asked for the tale of woe. We stared at each other; we laughed. "A case of legerdemain," said I. "Almost an artist," replied my brother.

Not so long ago, walking into Bath, I was accosted by an ex-Service man, who invited me to read a sheet of doggerel. Doggerel it was, but it might have been worse. "Did you write these verses?" I asked. "I did, Colonel," he replied. I gave him something and passed on. Five minutes later another man invited me to read the same doggerel. "Did you write these verses?" I asked. "I did, sir." "You may not be a poet," I told him, "but you are certainly an accomplished liar." He seemed to be amused, as I was. Before I reached Orange Grove a third fellow thrust the confounded sheet into my hand. "Did you write these verses?" I asked once more. "Oh, no," he answered with a grin. "A lot of us poor devils are hawking the muck about." This coaxed a florin out of me. The Superintendent of Police told me that he was well aware of this "stunt" and feared that mendacity too often walked hand in hand with mendicity.

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A witty retort given by a mendicant burst from Irish lips. A sturdy beggar appeared at the back-door of a fine house in Dublin. He rang the bell, which was answered by a footman, wearing an apron, and annoyed at being summoned from his labours in the pantry. "Is the masther in?" asked the beggar. "He is not to the likes of you," replied the footman. "Is the misthress in?" persisted the fellow. "She is not." "Can ye do annything for me?" The footman said sharply: "We have strict orders not to give away anything at the back door." The mendicant grinned and, as he turned away, fired the Parthian shot. "May ye be spared, me man, to wear that apron as long as ye live!"

St. Giles must have smiled.

§ II

HARVEST-HOME comes at the beginning of September. It is still a festival, but no longer the joyous feast of my childhood. I was not privileged to behold Ceres, impersonated by the prettiest lass in the village, the Queen of the Hock-cart, who bestrode the stout horse on the lead.

*The last in-gathering of the crop
Is loaded, and they climb the top,
And there huzza with all their force,
While Ceres mounts the foremost horse..
"Gee-up!" the rustic goddess cries,
And shouts more long and loud arise;
The swagging cart, with motion slow,
Reels careless on, and off they go!*

A lady, describing an old-time harvest-home in Gloucestershire, sums up the festival as an expression

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of "the finest feelings that can adorn humanity—hospitality, sociability, happiness, contentment, piety and gratitude".

I recall, as a small boy, the eating in church of a pippin which lay upon a window within my reach. My grandmother would have denounced this act as sacrilegious. My mother accepted my declaration that I believed, which I did, that the fruits of the earth had been placed in the window for my benefit. "I am glad", said my mother, "that you only ate one. Let us hope it won't give you a tummy-ache."

A friend has sent me a clipping from *The Times* which sets forth that this year at East Brent, in Somerset, the harvest-home was celebrated as follows: No less than 1,400 people sat down to lunch and tea. Fifty plum-puddings, a 90-lb. cheese, and a five-foot loaf were carried in procession behind a band and distributed amid applause. I wondered who paid for this. Not, surely, the impoverished farmers. The festivities continued till after midnight. *Floreat East Brent!*

Are "knacks" still made? Brand records that "when a farmer finishes his reaping, a small quantity of the ears of the last corn are twisted or tied together into a curious kind of figure, which is brought home with great acclamations, hung up over the table, and kept till the next year. The owner would think it extremely unlucky to part with it." Knacks were borne in processions all over the country. Plum-cakes were carried by boys.

*Hoacky is brought
Home with hallowin',
Boys with plumb-cake
The cart followin'.
Poor Robin, 1676.*

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May I live to see a harvest-home celebrated in every parish to commemorate a "back to the land" movement. Some of the finest arable soil in Norfolk is reverting to pasturage. Probably mind will always drift to the cities, but muscle atrophies from disuse in our towns, and what mind goes with it atrophies also. There must be, sooner or later, a return to mother earth, an exodus from the bondage of Babylon.

My brother warns me that what I have written about the bucolic mind may be misunderstood. That mind is shrewd and intelligent, as Mr. S. L. Bensusan has pointed out so whimsically, where its own interests are concerned. But it is parochial. I have entertained, or tried to do so, London waifs. All of them carry London in their hearts, disdainful of Arcadia, almost impudently so; they don't wish to live in the country; of its simple joys they know nothing. What applies to them is applicable to our village children. They are less vocal, but secretly, they love the countryside and are unhappy away from it. The lure of the town is dangled before them by persons who ought to know better. An indignant mother told me that an urban school-teacher had assured his class that they were bumpkins. Gamaliels of his kidney—so other mothers have informed me—indict domestic service as menial servitude. Village children are easily infected by the get-rich-quick injunction and its rider: "Demand the maximum of pay for a minimum of work." That heresy is a pestilence even in our hamlets. And well-meaning enthusiasts hug the conviction that square pegs can be whittled to fit round holes. Any intelligent country parson will confirm my statement that an Atlantic tosses between urban and agricultural activities. "Never the twain shall meet!"

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It may take a Mussolini to drive this nail home into the body politic.

§ III

ALTHOUGH St. Bartholomew's Day falls on the 24th of August, his famous fair was held in Smithfield in early September (during seven centuries) till discontinued in 1855. The curious can read Ben Jonson's play. The fair degenerated into a nuisance. It was once the chief cloth fair of the kingdom, patronized by the guilds of weavers, and presided over by the Lord Mayor of London and his aldermen. Pepys has plenty to say about it. "The fun of the fair", apart from the business done, attracted vast crowds. Acrobats, stilt-walkers, mummers and mountebanks, were there in numbers. The Court of Piepowder—what a good title for a novel!—held jurisdiction over matters commercial; scholars met to dispute nice questions on logic and grammar; men of muscle wrestled—a fortnight's riot, a *fritto misto*, of entertainment! Brand says that now and again the fortnight expanded into six weeks. He cites Monsieur Sorbière, a Frenchman visiting London, who says:

"I was at Bartholomew Fair. It consists most of toyshops, fiacres and pictures, ribbon shops, no books; many shops of confectioners where any woman may be commodiously treated. Knavery is here in perfection, dextrous cut-purses and pickpockets. I went to see the dancing on the ropes which was admirable. Coming out I met a man that would have took off my hat, but I secured it, and was going to draw my sword, crying out: 'Begar! damn'd rogue! Morbleu!' when a sudden I had a hundred people about me, crying: 'Here, Monsieur, see *Jephthah's Rash Vow*', 'See *The Tall Dutchwoman*', 'See *The Tiger*', says another; 'See *The*

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Horse and No Horse, whose tail stands where his head should do', etc., etc., so that betwixt rudeness and civility I was forced to get into a fiacre, and with an air of haste and at a full trot, got home to my lodgings."

A vivid Gallic description.

An English gentleman, with a Puritanical tang to him, writes more soberly in 1685:

"The main importance of this fair is not so much for merchandise, and the supplying what people want; but as a sort of Bacchanalia to gratify the multitude in their wandering and irregular thoughts. You may see fools, drunkards, and madmen acting for the same wages which they might get for honest labour, and live with credit beside. Others, if born in any monstrous shape, or have children that are such, here they celebrate their misery, and by getting of money forget how odious they are made. . . . There is one corner of this Elizium field devoted to the eating of pig, and the surfeits that attend it . . . those who eat imprudently do but hasten to the physitian or the churchyard . . ."

Something of a kill-joy, this gentleman!

Hone records, with gusto, the rarities to be seen in the penny peep-shows; a thoroughbred chestnut MARE, with seven legs, descended from Eclipse. Six of her legs were shod! Also a hybrid beast sired by a lion out of a tigress. Also an AUROCHOS, with a white mane. Also a performing ELEPHANT, who consumed eight hundred pounds of provender daily. Also two CONDORS, with wings measuring eighteen feet across. Also a BARBER-Blacksmith, who shaved magpies (?) at twopence a dozen. Also The White NEGRESS, rescued from her black parents by the bravery of a British Officer . . .

Small wonder that Bartlemy's Fair was popular. At Croyland little knives were bestowed upon visitors,

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in allusion to the knife wherewith St. Bartholomew was flayed. Many of these knives have been found at different times in the ruins of the abbey.

All our wakes and fairs were, in lesser degree, like to the great fair in Smithfield.

§ IV

HAIL Pomona !

*The pippin, burnished o'er with gold,
Of sweetest honey'd taste, the fair permain,
Temper'd, like comliest nymph, with white and red . . .*

September ushers in apple-gathering and the making of cider, whether by processes old or new. Bold indeed would be the "furriner" who dared to award the prize cider pippin to Hereford, Devon, Dorset or Somerset ! Our gammers contend that a good apple year is a grand year for twins. Nature provides extra mouths for good tippie. Burgundy for kings, champagne for nobles, claret for gentlemen, and port for shopkeepers. This tag is attributed to Bentley, the great classical scholar, who flourished at the beginning of the eighteenth century, when vintage port was not drunk by the Fellows of St. John's. Why did he make no mention of our cider, so good when it is good that the earl of Manchester, when ambassador to France, is said to have passed off this beverage on the French nobility as a delicious wine ? It is home-brewed in many parts of the country, but machinery is ousting the man. The proper pulping of apples into what is called the "cheese" is a matter of major importance. Out of the "cheese" is expressed the juice which is then strained into large vats, where

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fermentation follows. Sediment falls thickly to the bottom ; scum rises to the top. If the fermentation has been steady the liquid is bright and clear before it is racked off into casks. Six months later it may have to be fined. In a recipe I have for claret cup, it is suggested that dry sparkling cider should be used instead of soda-water. We have acted on this suggestion, and have kept our little secret inviolate till now. I was told not long ago that the famous hock-cup, served at Buckingham Palace, owed its excellence to the dry sparkling cider used instead of soda-water ; another Victorian secret jealously kept.

Several ladies have asked me to set down any recipe not likely to be found in cookery books. So here is one. When it was given to me I was told that King Edward declared it to be the best omelette in the world. We call it " the greedy omelette ", because our guests demand two helpings, but it's high resounding name is "*L'Omelette du Baron de Barente*".

Cut into dice two small cooked lobsters and warm the same for ten minutes in a gill of cream. Add one glass of port wine—and reduce a little. Add a few small sliced mushrooms (or *cèpes*) stewed till tender in butter. Make an omelette of three eggs. Put the lobster, etc., into the middle of the omelette. Pour over it a Béchamel Sauce to which has been added a teaspoonful of Worcester and Harvey Sauce. Sprinkle omelette with one ounce of grated Parmesan cheese. Salamander, and serve as hot as possible. This is enough for six persons.

A lordly dish, to be served at luncheon ! The plainer the other dishes the better. A white burgundy, a Chablis *tête de cuvée*, if you possess such nectar, is the right wine. The ordinary good plain

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cook—so euphemistically styled—is hardly able to cope with this royal omelette.

§ v

OUR dahlias are gorgeous. The Swedish botanist, Dahl, gave his name to the flower. It bloomed—so Mr. Skinner tells us—in such splendour at Malmaison, where the Empress Josephine planted it with her own hands, that she declared it to be her favourite flower. She would not allow a bloom, a seed, or a root to go out of her possession. A Polish prince bribed a gardener to steal a hundred of them, paying him a louis apiece. After this Josephine petulantly refused to cultivate them any longer. One is tempted to exclaim: “A plague on the woman!” What a sidelight this anecdote throws on her! I should mistrust any woman who selected the pretentious dahlia as her favourite flower; I should loathe her for discarding it because it gladdened the eyes of others.

Chambers mentions a prediction made concerning Josephine, when she was girl, Mademoiselle Marie Josephine Rose Tascher de la Pagerie. A mulatto woman told her fortune in Martinique. “You will marry a fair man. Your star promises you two alliances. Your first husband will be born in Martinique, but will pass his life in Europe with girded sword. An unhappy law-suit will separate you. He will perish in a tragical manner. Your second husband will be a dark man, of European origin and small fortune, but he will fill the world with his glory and fame. You will then become an eminent lady, more than a queen. Then, after having astonished the world, you will die unhappy.” This prediction came true in

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every particular. Did persons, whose good faith is unquestionable, know of this prediction before Josephine met Napoleon? Was it ever printed, or made public, before she became empress?

Sunflowers are splashing gold against the long low wall of our herbaceous border. Clytie, when deserted by Apollo, was turned into this flower, but surely Moore exercised poetic licence when he wrote:

*As the sunflower turns to her god when he sets,
The same face that she turned when he rose.*

Our sunflowers are not so faithful.

Michaelmas daisies—of which we boast many varieties—will soon be attracting the bumble bees and the butterflies. A few roses have taken on a new lease of life. Our sunk-garden is at its best.

It is difficult to believe that we built our walls only four years ago. My friend, André Simon, came to us and exclaimed: "*Mon cher, tu as la maladie de la pierre!*" I caught a twinkle in his eye, as he added: "*Et moi, aussi.*" We planted tiny ferns in the cracks, Arabis, Alyssum, Wall-flowers, Campanulas, Stonecrop, Alpine pinks, Catmint, Valerian, Aubretia, and many saxifrages, but Nature was busy too. Her diligence has outstripped ours. Now we have to curtail the growths. Against the north containing-wall the lavender hedge is so thick that it hides the grey stones. What we designed to be formal has become informal. Charm has crept in, breaking up severe lines; moss lies between the slabs of pavement, a vivid, velvety green; the stone balustrade is festooned with ampelopsis; the stone steps leading to the garden are partly hidden by the encroachments of half a dozen sedums. Yes, our sunk garden might have been here in the

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days of Good Queen Anne ! It has ceased to invite odorous comparison between it and our Roman Bath, which, according to the guide-books, is nearly two thousand years old. When we were making the lower terrace, we unearthed Roman coins and a stone pipe encrusted inside with lime. The bath itself is in the form of a Roman helmet, and seven feet deep when full of water, which bubbles out of a mask found at the bottom of the Tiber.

Verily our lines lie in pleasant places.

§ VI

I HAVE come across an intriguing note : “ Somerset is noted for the fertility of its soil and the folly of its gentlemen”, but I cannot spring folly to “ shoot it as it flies ”. On the contrary, the Somerset gentlemen—apart from the nit-wits of Bath in Nash’s day—appear to have been home-keeping squires with a very lively sense of what they owed themselves and their neighbours. Many estates have remained under the same ownership since Elizabethan days, Montacute for one, to which the lover of old England will be well advised to pay a visit. Montacute has just passed from the Phelips family, and is now an historical monument. The writer of the unwarrantable tag I have cited adds : “ Confirms the legend that the Wise Men don’t come from the West.” This is rubbish. Sir Francis Drake, and scores of others, came from the West. Our Somerset Roll of Worthies, Unworthies and Villains, contains fourteen hundred names—— ! I submit that our wise men showed their wisdom by remaining here, satisfied with conditions which included peace and plenty up to the time of the Great War.

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Had Horace Greeley lived in London instead of New York, he might still have said: "Young man, go West", with a further admonition: "And stay there!"

I hope that my pilgrim will devote a full month to Dorset. He might make the Digby Hotel, in Sherborne, his headquarters, and set about the quest of our lesser manor-houses, such as Bingham's Melcombe and Mapperton. I came upon Mapperton unexpectedly, and seeing the *façade* of the house aglow with a September sunset, basking placidly, but with no indication—such as smoke from the chimneys—that the owner was in residence, I believed for a moment that I had discovered the *château* of the Sleeping Beauty. Athelhampton is another gem set in perfect gardens. Not far away you can wander down the Valley of the Var, where Tess milked her cows, the scene of that poignant midnight journey when the unhappy Angel Clare carried in his arms a living bride whom he so foolishly declared to be dead! When I read the novel as a young man I nearly hurled the book from me, so furious was I with the anæmic hero. I recall how I longed to have Tess in my arms . . . I hadn't the gumption to perceive then what is so clear now: the subtlety of the author in his indictment of Victorian sentimentality. Despite his subtlety he was censured for speaking of Tess as a pure woman, which spiritually and mentally she was.

Hardy should be read in Hardy's country, so little changed outwardly.

I bespeak a pilgrimage to Lyme Regis.

*Lyme, although a little town,
I think it wondrous pretty;
If 'tis my fate to wear a crown,
I'll make of it a city.*

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This is said to have been the composition of Monmouth, who deserved beheading if he wrote it ; but the quatrain has been assigned to somebody else.

You tumble into Lyme as you tumble into Clovelly ; you can walk sedately into Bridport, where hempen rope and nets are made, and which, like Rye, was once a seaport. It is now two miles inland, within easy distance of Mapperton. Dorset villages have a nomenclature amusingly their own. Does the rector of Piddle Hinton still give away on Old Christmas Day a pound of bread, a pint of ale, and a mince-pie to every poor person in the parish ? And, on Candlemas Day, do the boys and girls of Lyme Regis light a candle and sip punch till the candle burns itself out ? In many Dorset parishes white cakes were carried to every house on Good Friday by the church clerk, who received a gratuity. Pack Monday Fair is still held at Sherborne on the first Monday after the 10th of October. I recall a fortune-teller, named Pretoria, at this fair who had a gift of clairvoyance equal to that of the Dyke gypsy of Brighton. Dyer says that this fair originated when the Abbey Church was finished. The workmen packed up their tools and held a wake in the churchyard, blowing cows' horns in their rejoicing. At the village of Thornton, near Sherborne, a custom prevailed amongst the tenants of the manor of depositing five shillings in a tombstone in the churchyard, which, if done before high noon on St. Thomas's Day, precluded the lord of the manor from taking his tithe of hay. Such customs are hardly worth recording, but they indicate a yesterday of small observances dear to our forbears. We deem ourselves to be so much wiser than they. Are we ? Thomas Hardy answers the question in *Under the Greenwood Tree*, in

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The Woodlanders, in *Far from the Madding Crowd*. He puts wisdom into the mouths of illiterate country people who speak out of the fullness of first-hand experience. An anthology of the wise sayings of Hardy's gaffers and gammers would be acclaimed by Solomon. That is the difference between Meredith and Hardy. I find pleasure and profit in *Richard Feverel* and *The Egoist*, but the author imposes his personality. With every thought-inspiring phrase I whisper to myself: "This is Meredith speaking." Hardy rarely obtrudes himself, except as the lover of stone. All his humbler characters appear to be people whom I have known. They come from the Wessex soil, from the woodlands and pastures, from the hills and vales. The dewy freshness of Fancy, Bathsheba, of Tess and her sister milkmaids, was not invented but picked as a rose is picked. Jane Austen does not "invent" characters; she depicts people whom she knew, but she dealt with the puppets of her time, stiff and starched gentlepeople, whom we can hardly recognize as flesh and blood. Their pettiness of outlook, engrained selfishness, fatuities and hypocrisies are made entertaining by a great artist. Wisdom is absent in Miss Austen's papas and mammas; it is ever present in Hardy's peasants. Miss Austen has the lighter touch in narrative. Let us thank God for both of them!

§ VII

IN Dorset the girls used to pluck an ash-leaf, put it into the left hand and say:

*The even ash-leaf in my hand,
The first I meet shall be my man.*

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And then, putting the leaf into a glove :

*The even ash-leaf in my glove
The first I meet shall be my love.*

Finally the leaf was tucked into her bosom :

*The even ash-leaf in my bosom,
The first I meet shall be my husband.*

Others would, on going to bed, put their shoes at right angles with each other, in the shape of a T, and say :

*Hoping this night my true love to see,
I place my shoes in the form of a T.*

The true love, so we are assured, appeared to the sleeping maid but—only in a dream.

Trent is a village, not far from Sherborne, which distils charm as unostentatiously as a violet emits fragrance. King Charles hid in the manor-house. That information failed to quicken my pulses, but the tiny gardens and cottages of Trent made me wish that I was a painter in water-colour. Many cottages are perched high above the road. At Marston Magna a rivulet flows through the main street past a Ham-stone manor-house reputed to be haunted. I am sure that I should haunt just such a house if, living in it, I had been prematurely constrained to leave it. Marston Magna is not unlike Bourton-on-the-Water on a miniature scale. Excellent cider is made there, and I dare say that every urchin in the village is a "griggler", or picker of apples left over in the cider orchards.

Regretfully I forbear to name other villages in Dorset. Sir Hubert Medlycott owns Ven and the manor-house at Sandford Orcas, both lovely beyond

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compare. Ven, possibly, is one of the stateliest Queen Anne houses in England.

§ VIII

I HAPPENED to mention in my introductory chapter that some of our local superstitions might provoke ridicule. There is an ancient belief that if a loaf is loaded with quicksilver and placed in a river or canal it will drift to the spot where lies the body of some drowned person. This experiment was tried *successfully* last week!—A girl was missing. She was last seen—I quote from a newspaper-cutting—on a path leading to the Coventry Canal, on the banks of which her purse was found, but dragging in the canal proved useless. The girl's uncle (I withhold names) put a quantity of quicksilver into a loaf which he threw into the canal. Next morning the uncle took a policeman to the canal and searched for the loaf. He found it resting on the water at a spot a few yards from a bridge. Amid great excitement drags were thrown into the water—and the girl's body was located and brought to the side. . . .

From time to time cases have been reported of bodies found by similar means.

Could Sir Oliver Lodge give us a reasonable explanation? To a child, a needle apparently moving of its own volition to attach itself to a magnet is black (or white) magic.

Glancing through a huge folio of press-clippings in our Public Library I have come across inexplicable testimony concerning the truth of similar superstitions. The cynic will observe, no doubt, that we are not told of the failures. My mother had sufficient High-

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land blood in her veins to justify the assumption that she might, on occasion, get a glimpse of the future. She would write to me, when we were seven thousand miles apart, to say that on such and such a date she had suffered acutely from premonition of trouble affecting myself or my brothers. Without exception these premonitions did not come true. But if, by coincidence, one only had been verified, I should have been tremendously impressed.

The Great Fire of London took place in September, 1666. Evelyn gives a graphic account of it, and sums up: "London was, but is no more." Nothing comparable to this disaster has happened in our times with the notable exception of the burning of San Francisco after the earthquake. Evelyn saw two hundred thousand people of all ranks and degrees perishing of hunger and destitution, "yet not asking one penny for relief", which appeared to the diarist a stranger sight than any he had yet beheld, as well it might. Nevertheless in London, as in San Francisco, the flames kindled an ardour for reconstruction which, to the publicist, presents a moral applicable to the desolation of our financial world to-day. The "cits", after the Great Plague and Fire, must have exclaimed as our Reds are shouting: "Civilization has collapsed!" The imps of comedy, then as now, probably retorted: "Oh, no—you have."

§ 1X

BARBERS' poles are still common enough, but their origin and use are drifting out of our memories. Barbers practised phlebotomy, or blood-letting. The pole was grasped by the patient. When

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a man had to suffer amputation of a limb without an anæsthetic he was invited to bite on a bullet. Some may have lost teeth as well as legs! Round the barber's pole was twisted the tape used for bandaging. Hone tells us that "on a person coming in to be bled, the tape was disengaged from the pole, and the pole put into the patient's hand". After the operation what was left of the tape was twisted round the pole, and then, in the course of time, both pole and tape were hung at the door of the barber's shop. Finally a pole, not used, was painted with stripes, in imitation of the tape, and became a permanent sign.

One gentleman combined spirit-selling with barbering, displaying the following admonition:

*Rove not from pole to pole, but here turn in,
Where naught exceeds the shaving, but the gin.*

Another bidder for lively custom, a Californian of my own day, born not far from the Blarney Stone, combined barber-shop and saloon. Above his door hung this notice:

*What d'ye think——?
Micky Mulcahy gives a shave an' a dhrink
For fifteen cints!*

"Two-bits", or twenty-five cents, was the customary fee for a shave alone; so Mr. Mulcahy did good business. Then, craftily, he altered the punctuation of his advertisement, and charged twenty-five cents instead of fifteen. To a protesting cowboy, he exhibited the revised sign.

*What——! D'ye think
Micky Mulcahy gives a shave an' a dhrink
For fifteen cints?*

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The cowboy grinned, and paid up the "two-bits".

I am often asked if I found superstition in our cow-country in California. We witnessed the passing of the Hispano-Californian; Spanish was talked on the big ranches; some of the Americans had crossed the plains in prairie schooners. The squatters were known as "Pikers", and all the Spanish were superstitious; but we, fresh from Harrow, ridiculed what we took to be rubbish, and thereby missed an opportunity to collect material which I might have been able to use later on.

§ x

*The Michaelmas daisy among dead leaves
Blooms for Saint Michael's valorous deeds.*

THIS mighty archangel is dear to me because he inspired that masterpiece in stone Mont Saint Michel and our own lesser mount in Cornwall. Once more I commend to the reader Henry Adams's noble quarto, which has a place of honour on my library table. In that book, facing the second page, is an illustration of the mount, a triumph of photogravure. Those who love the Gothic fanes of England will thank me for urging them to read *Mont St. Michel*, because, more than any other book I know, it reveals to us a past foreshadowing the present. We live again, as the editor points out, in the thirteenth century and become part of it, part of its gaiety and light-heartedness, its youthful ardour and abounding action, its child-like simplicity and frankness, its normal and healthy and all-embracing devotion.

It does far more than this. What has been may be again. Elsewhere I have spoken of Mont St. Michel as romance in stone, war in stone, love in stone.

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Love fashioned "*La Merveille*". Artist and artisan laboured together to a common end, incomparably achieved. Who dares to say that the fused energies of the future, emerging from the crucible of the present, may not accomplish to the glory of God and Man what was achieved seven centuries ago, another Renaissance? That anything can be done by Man alone, I refuse to believe. The divine spirit must animate the flesh.

I believed, till I was constrained to verify what I knew to be hearsay, that Queen Elizabeth, because she happened to be eating a goose when the Armada was sunk and dispersed, ordained that geese should be eaten on Michaelmas Day. But news of the defeat of the Armada came to her at the end of July, as has been mentioned. The custom seems to have been common long before her reign. Probably the geese were eaten when they were deemed fit for the table, and only a goose would come to any other conclusion. In Devon the children used to be told not to gather blackberries after Michaelmas Day because the devil had set his cloven foot upon them. Breton children refuse to eat blackberries, because it is generally believed that the crown of thorns was made out of their brambles. So far as the Devon children are concerned, common sense suggests that wise mothers are well aware that over-ripe blackberries provoke colic.

The Furry Festival, held at Helston in Cornwall on the 8th of May, where persons who refused to join in the fun were ducked, was in commemoration of one of St. Michael's valorous deeds. A block of granite, which for many years lay in the yard of the *Angel Inn*, was, so the legend runs, originally placed at the mouth of hell whence it was carried away by the devil

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as he issued forth in frolicsome mood on an excursion into Cornwall. It chanced that St. Michael crossed his path ; a combat followed and the devil, sorely worsted, dropped his pebble, the Hell's stone, in his flight ; hence the name of the town. The Sunday before Michaelmas Day was known in Surrey as Crack-nut Sunday, because nuts were cracked and eaten in church. I recall my astonishment as a small boy when I beheld Scotch choirboys sucking peppermints under the nose of the meenister !

At Kidderminster the inhabitants threw cabbage-stalks at each other. This singular custom seems to have something (I know not what) to do with the election of the town bailiff and the corporation. Respectable townspeople threw apples at *them*.

French girls, before the war, still believed that St. Michael provided them with good husbands.

Dyer gives a list of the saints whose services were invoked against various diseases. St. Apollonia and St. Lucy against toothache ; St. Anthony against all inflammations ; St. Blaise against bones sticking in the throat ; St. Quintan against coughs ; St. Venisa (whoever she may be) against the green-sickness. I mention six out of a round three dozen.

In Monmouthshire there is a tag : " Three things never come to good : Christmas pigs, Michaelmas fowls, and parsons' daughters."

I return to St. Michael. Originally he was regarded as the special protector of the Jewish nation, and then he became the Defender of the Christian Church, and the patron saint of all Italians. He is the conqueror of Satan. Under his ægis William of Normandy invaded England. Adams points out that every Englishman living to-day must have a Norman tinc-

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ture of blood in his veins. *Tant mieux!* We need it. That tincture may be the saving of us.

It is impossible to collect, wherever you may find them, local customs and folk-lore without a realization of what underlies them, the religion, apart from creeds, that means a sense of contact with God. Through the medium of the Saints, the vast majority of so-called common people cultivated relationship with the Deity. Unless you grasp that, you are unable to understand their lives and labours. Labour was prayer to them. A true lover of England cannot afford to ignore customs now obsolete but still pregnant with a significance that cannot die. I am puzzled by the throwing of cabbage-stalks at Kidderminster, but I am sure that it had meaning other than what we should call to-day love of a "rag". A gentle reader, with access to tomes overlooked by me, may furnish enlightenment.

October

October

§ I

CHILL October ! Happily not so chill this year as it can be sometimes, and spectacularly gorgeous in varied tints. The chestnuts and beeches are at their loveliest. From my library window I can gloat over the splendour of the foliage. This too is the month of melting mists, palely blue.

Dim with the mist of years, grey flits the shade of power.

Of all the months October, perhaps, symbolizes most enchantingly the power and beauty that is passing linked with the glad assurance of return in glorious resurrection, even if some of us are not here to witness the miracle. That is October's message to the world : what has been will be. Power is grey when it is waning. It flits, and comes back rosy as Aurora.

A minor miracle has taken place here. Four years ago our red squirrels, disarmingly friendly in the nutting season, were driven out of Eden by their grey kinsmen. We were told that we should never see the engaging little fellows again. Had I not sworn never to fire off a gun on our small domain, I might have waged war against the invaders. It was suggested that we might poison them, but, not unmindful of our neighbours' cats (and our own), we had agreed that

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the only poison used by us should be kept under lock and key for the extermination of wasps. Anyway, the grey squirrels were left in undeserved peace. Now, for some inscrutable reason, they have left our premises, and their red cousins are eating the nuts. We take this to be a sign that good does triumph over evil, and are much heartened thereby. Nevertheless I should like a naturalist to explain a passing and a return so puzzling to us.

We are busy planting bulbs. A bulb is another symbol of rebirth. The drab ugliness of it, its squat formlessness; its lack of fragrance or any other indication of life, make of it a world's wonder. We are also busy transplanting shrubs which may do better elsewhere. Miss Jekyll advises that this should be done before the fall of the leaf. It is instructive to compare the growths of *Osmunda Regalis*. In our woodland garden it languishes. Some plants which we moved to more congenial soil a year ago look vigorous as slum children after a month at the sea. We find too that Miss Jekyll's insistence upon careful examination of roots, when replanting, is all important. We took pains with our tiny yews, warned that, despite our care, we might expect to lose about ten per cent. We have not lost one, and, within four years, we have a hedge which is indeed a *praemium diligentiae*.

§ II

ST. DENYS, patron saint of France, has a place in our Church of England calendar.

He was beheaded, with other martyrs, during the persecution of Valerian in A.D. 272. Hone cites the

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reverend father Ribadeneira : “ They beheaded the martyrs on that mountain which is at present called Mons Martyrum.” To-day visitors to Paris know that mountain as Montmartre ; and, when I lived there in the *beaux jours d’antan*, I supposed in my ignorance that I dwelt upon the Mount of Mars ! The saint, so the reverend father continues, carried his head in his hands for two miles till he met a good woman, named Catula, to whom he presented it. It was believed afterwards that St. Denys repeatedly kissed his head whilst he carried it ! How this was achieved nobody informs us. The monastery of St. Denys gloried in the relics of the patron saint, but Pope Leo IX declared that the body was at Ratisbonne, lacking the little finger of the right hand. This is not the only instance of a body being, after death, in two places at once, like Sir Boyle Roche’s bird. Innumerable miracles were performed at the saint’s shrine, near Paris. The innocent credulity of the people of that time is perhaps even less confounding than the credulity of our Communists who believe that Russia is a land of milk and honey, overflowing with peace, prosperity, and good will.

The 6th of October is St. Faith’s Day. Brand tells us of a custom observed in the north of England.

“ A cake of flour, spring water, salt and sugar must be made by three maidens or widows, and each must have an equal share in the composition. It is baked in a Dutch oven, in silence, and the cake must be turned nine times, or three times to each person. When it is baked it is divided into three parts. Each cook takes her share, dividing it into nine slips ; each slip must be passed three times through a wedding ring borrowed from a woman who has been married at least seven years. Then each maid or widow must eat her nine slips, repeating the following rhyme :

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*O good St. Faith, be kind to-night,
And bring to me my heart's delight ;
Let me my future husband view,
And be my visions chaste and true.*

“ All three get into bed with the ring suspended by a string to the head of the couch ; they will be sure to dream of their future husbands.”

Faith is a fascinating Christian name, and might well be in commoner use inasmuch as faith in themselves is a special attribute of our younger women. Let us predict that the children of the future will choose their own names, and take a lively part in the christening. No young lady with a sanguine complexion will select the name of Lily.

This morning I received a circular inviting me to join the Nudists. Upon payment of a small fee I learn that I am entitled to an interview with a Nudist who will receive me *in puris naturalibus* ! Then, it is suggested, I can ask questions. If I accepted this cordial invitation, I fear that my questions would be disconcerting. I should want to know, for instance, if our climate lends itself to nudity. Are we to prance about in a December blizzard with never a fig-leaf between us and rude Boreas ? Again, are we expected to sit at meat naked as we were born ? I am sure that my appetite would fail if I took into dinner a lady of too gracious curves or one with no curves at all. On the same grounds a nymph of sweet seventeen might choke over her grape-fruit if the man beside her was hairy as an Ainu or a living skeleton. If only we were as Adam and Eve before the Fall—— ! My brother asks if the Nudist Movement would not cease to move if the sexes were kept apart ?

These new movements have something in common

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with the old stagnations. Any man, woman, or child who believes that we should cast our garments to the void is an offender not so much against common decency as common sense. If we smile at the devout Catholics who declared that St. Denys carried his head in his hand and kissed it, let us laugh at those who believe, possibly as devoutly, that the business of the world can be carried on in all weathers without a rag to one's back. Nature, not Mrs. Grundy, forbids. Because it was unusually cold this morning, so cold that I had put on a "woolley", I threw this invitation into the fire.

§ III

AT dinner last night, over a Commice pear and a glass of heartening port, the talk turned to that great quality, generosity, acclaimed alike by savages and sages. Nature, of course, sets us an example. Her generosity is staggering. Perhaps the most ignoble attribute in Man is meanness, and we don't realize how easily it becomes a habit. I had read a dull article in the evening paper upon *Saving and Spending*, not too convincingly written, with a bias (bearing in mind the approaching Christmas season) in favour of spending. How delightfully Charles Lamb or Hazlitt would deal with this difficult question! Appeals on the part of the Press to spend more and save less meet with a ready response from the generous giver, who already has spent more than he can afford. The mean man tightens his purse-strings with the solacing reflection: "The world is full of fools." The writer of the article delivered himself of the platitude that production demands customers, that industry must

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become bankrupt if expenditure fails. Unable to solve the most difficult problem of the hour, we fell back upon a consideration of meanness, which is individual and particular. Without holding any brief for the pinchers, and leaving out the virtues of thrift and a reasonable provision for the future, we took the case of the man who has suffered acutely from poverty when he was young, constrained to make sixpence do duty for a shilling, forced, willy-nilly, to practise self-denial in all its Protean forms. Can this poor leopard change his spots, when Fortune smiles upon him? We agreed that it was extremely unlikely. On the other hand, the cheerful giver, bless him! has given away what he so ingratiatingly refused to save. He is on the rocks. And so, if the situation is to be saved, it must be saved by the savers! Into what a *cul-de-sac*, my masters, have we wandered! And under what capricious, stupid leadership! We were entreated to save not so long ago. Now the same men urge us to spend. Under which king, Bezonian, are we to live or die?

My brother and I, however, came to the conclusion that lovers of England, throughout our history, have been whole-hearted givers. Generosity has been inscribed in gold upon the banner of our pride. "I give" would have been a better motto for the Order of the Garter, in my opinion. Giving has become a national habit. Now, with universal suffrage, the many have too generously squandered the capital of the few, and experience, no doubt, an uplifting glow. What would a wise Martian think of this vicarious generosity, and what comment would he make upon the doctrine that giving away what belongs to others will bring about the millennium. Our Nudists, by a

strange oversight, failed to mention the strongest reason in favour of nudity. If our "have nots" come into supreme power we shall have no money to buy clothes.

§ IV

ST. LUKE'S DAY falls on the 18th. His claim to be regarded as the beloved physician rests upon a Pauline passage in the Epistle to the Colossians. Matthew Arnold in his *Literature and Dogma* lightly and sweetly poked fun at a brace of prelates who suggested that "something should be *done* for the Third Person of the Trinity". They would have escaped such sly criticism had they pleaded for more information about the least well known of the Evangelists. The learned Dr. Smith can only trace a "dim" outline of St. Luke's life. He was not a Jew, but probably a Greek. In the windows of Charlton Church a gilded pair of horns is a mediæval symbol of the saint, as the patron of fairs. Dyer cites a quaint custom of Charlton Fair, held on St. Luke's Day. The men came to it in women's clothes. On their way to the fair they amused themselves by lashing what women they met with furze, it being proverbial that "all was fair at Horn Fair". St. Luke's Day was also known as Whip-Dog Day, because schoolboys were encouraged to whip dogs seen on the streets, a custom said to be of Roman origin. The Catholic legend is credible: a priest, celebrating mass upon this saint's day, dropped the host after consecration, which was snapped up and swallowed by a dog hidden beneath the altar. The dog was slain, and canine persecution on St. Luke's Day became a custom, now happily obsolete. My

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brother wants to know when dogs first came into their own. Jesse, in his *Anecdotes of Dogs*, begins with an affirmation that "with the exception of women there is nothing on earth so agreeable, or so necessary to the comfort of man, as a dog". Millions are of this opinion, and yet, oddly enough, no dog lover of my acquaintance can tell me when and where these good companions were accorded their rightful place in our affections. With rare exceptions the ancients apparently did not regard them as intimate friends. To this day they are cruelly treated in the East. What they have suffered under the knives of vivisectors does not bear relating. Shakespeare, whom we cannot envisage as other than a kindly man, is not too kind in his allusions to dogs. The quotation from the Old Testament: "Is thy servant a dog that he should do this thing?" has been on every lip.

I believe that England can claim to be the first country to recognize the dog as a fellow-creature, and consistently to treat him as such. And yet, conceding this, it is difficult to assign even an approximate date for a belated recognition of fidelity and service. I asked a famous M.F.H. if he had any notion when the Sunday Stable ritual began to establish itself. He replied vaguely: "Before my time."

Lap-dogs may have been dear to the Queen of Sheba. The Pekinese have been pets of the Chinese Imperial Family during three thousand years. The mignons of the Court of Henri II carried diminutive dogs, even as the smart ladies of Queen Anne's day cuddled monkeys. I am speaking of the common dog. When did he begin to have his day?

St. Luke is also the patron saint of painters, but apart from that genial gentleman, Sir Luke Fildes, I

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have never yet met a painter who spoke of his patron saint. Innumerable Virgins, said to be painted by the Evangelist, were regarded throughout the Middle Ages with peculiar veneration. Mrs. Jameson mentions that in the Church of Santa Maria in Via Lata, at Rome, there is a little chapel in which "as it hath been handed down from the first ages, St. Luke painted an effigy of the Virgin-Mother of God". Some of St. Luke's Virgins were painted black. All these primitive pictures are said to be of Greek workmanship. The symbol of the gilded horns may have been adopted from the legend that St. Luke wrote his gospel seated on an ox. In the Munich Gallery there is a Van Eyck which portrays the saint painting a portrait of the Madonna. It is not known whether or not the beloved physician suffered martyrdom.

§ v

ST. CRISPIN, patron saint of cobblers, is another saint of whom we know little. Dr. Smith refuses to give him an enlightening line. Crispin, so good Catholics believe, was able to supply the poor with shoes at the lowest price, because an angel furnished the leather. He and his holy brother, Crispianus, were beheaded at Soissons, *circa* A.D. 350. Mrs. Jameson saw an old print depicting the brothers careering over the sea in a bark drawn by sea-horses, attended by Tritons, and attired in the full court dress of Louis XV——!

Crispin's Day used to be a holiday for shoe-makers, a day of much feasting and jollity. I think it is George Eliot who says somewhere that cobblers are generally radicals driven by the evil smell of leather to adopt

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political views of sable complexion. Probably they became radicals when Crispin's Day ceased to be a holiday. On this day the battle of Agincourt was fought, a battle waged against almost invincible odds. Our losses were computed at 1,600 men ; the French left slain on the field, 10,000, including the Constable d'Albert, three dukes, five counts and ninety barons. With what feelings did that " capital demand ", the fair Catharine, surrender her hand to the conqueror ? Did his wit prevail over her natural instincts ? Harry of England assured her that he loved France so well that he would not part with a village of it. And yet he could not see many a fair French city for one fair maid that stood in his way. Did she believe him ?

Southey says that the shoemakers rested from work on Crispin's Day because Christ rested on his way to Calvary at a cobbler's stall. He speaks of the cobblers of Keswick going a-hunting (with John Peel ?) and returning gaily to a supper of hot goose. Our diarists do not mention Crispin, much to my disappointment. I have glanced through the works of that eminent divine, Richard Hooker, in the vain hope of finding something about our saints. Hallam speaks of him as the finest and most philosophical writer of the Elizabethan period. Obviously, he was incredulous of the legends, once read aloud in Church, and speaks of " the very nests which bred them abhorring them ", but he admits that what is uncanonical may be most *profitable* although not divine, a remarkable concession coming from him, but he had, as Keble points out, a deep conviction of the impiety of alienating things once hallowed. I commend to the would-be man of letters a study of Hooker's and Donne's style. Both dipped deep into the well of English undefyled. Upon

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Hooker the gods bestowed wisdom, humour, patience, toleration and—a scolding wife.

§ VI

RICH indeed is October in saints. Come we now to Saints Simon and Jude. The flowers of this season make a determined effort to stand upright till their festival is past. Of the two apostles, reputed to be the brothers of Christ, we know little or nothing. There is a masterpiece by Perugino, in the Musée at Marseilles, where, at the foot of the Virgin's throne, are portrayed two lovely children, Simon and Jude. There is a custom still common enough connected with them. Pare an apple without breaking the skin; throw the rind, when cut, over your head, and it will form in falling the initial of your lover's Christian name.

*St. Simon and St. Jude, on you I intrude
By this paring I hold to discover,
Without any delay, please tell me this day
The first letter of him my true lover.*

The maid is enjoined to recite the above, turn three times, and cast the paring over her left shoulder. The pips of the apple must then be placed in a cold spring and eaten, later on, by the damsel.

§ VII

LET us turn to sinners, flesh and blood persons like ourselves. Ever since I began to write this book, interested friends have sent me clippings and notes likely to be of service. Out of them I select

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what strikes my fancy. One reached me a week ago, with an arresting caption : *He Laughs At Life*. Under this in true transpontine fashion is an addition in smaller type : *But Takes No Risk On a Funeral*.

A chemist and veterinary surgeon living in Wiltshire :

Arranged his own funeral ;

Bought his own tombstone to his own design :

Supervised and assisted in its erection ;

Affixed to it a tablet to his own memory.

And then, exciting climax, although over seventy, married the sweetheart of his boyhood.

This, one would think, is a true story hard to beat ; but I can cap it. A country gentleman of Dorset, living not far from Sherborne, not only arranged his own funeral but insisted on a full-dress rehearsal. He was carried in his coffin to a mausoleum. Half-way to his tomb he called a halt : " You are shaking me ; I won't have it." A gaffer commenting on this observed to me : " A right rare ole sart, he wur ! On Sunday arternoons he'd mount a hill and blow a horn, yas, he did ! An' fust gal as answered horn got a kiss an' a golden guinea." This queer character left instructions that, after his death, a warmed and ironed copy of *The Times* should be placed each morning in the mausoleum.

I asked a gammer why funerals were more popular than weddings. She gave me a sound answer. Funerals bring together more members of the family. A mistress gives a servant permission to attend a funeral, but not, as a rule, a wedding. And there is the thrill of the will, or, failing that, the division of the deceased's property, negligible though it may be. I recall one cottage left bare as Mother Hubbard's

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cupboard within a few hours of the interment. Let us not forget the baked meats and liquid refreshment provided by the humblest.

Cecrops is said to have instituted funeral entertainments for the purpose of renewing friendships among old friends. Curious that my gammer gave me a similar reason. Brand lays stress upon the feasting. One, Margaret Atkinson, a widow, left orders in her will that the next Sunday after her burial there be provided two dozen of bread, a kilderkin of ale, two gammons of bacon, three shoulders of mutton and two couple of rabbits, desiring all the parish to take part thereof, and a table *to be set in the midst of the church*, with everything necessary thereto. This was but a modest repast compared with that furnished at a Highland lord's funeral. After the body was interred a hundred black cattle and three hundred sheep were killed for the *entertainment* of the company!

*In northern customs duty was exprest
To friends departed by their funeral feast.
Tho' I've consulted Hollingshead and Stow,
I find it very difficult to know
Who, to refresh th' attendants to the grave
Burnt claret first, or Naples-bisket gave.*

It was customary to set a pewter plate holding salt upon the corpse, salt being abhorred of the devil, and salt, which never putrefies, being a symbol of eternity. In Ireland the plate of salt is placed above the heart. Candles had like significance.

*. . . Those that burn
To light the dead, and warm the unfruitful urn.*

A Cheshire squire, an open-hearted blade, possessed of a fine cellar, left instructions that his best wine was

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to be drunk at his funeral ; and he hoped that his friends would enjoy it, a kindly thought. Quite recently I read of another will in which the testator expressed a wish that his death might be sudden. The prayer to be delivered from swift shuffling off of the mortal coil ought to be deleted from our liturgy. Common sense has shortened the period of mourning, and abolished the dismal trappings of woe so dear to our Great White Queen. Fulsome and lying epitaphs have gone with them. I recall vividly how, as a boy, I was bewildered by the excessive lamentation over an old lady who, after much suffering long drawn out, had gone, so we children were assured, to her heavenly home. It occurred to me even then : " But—what a change for the better ! Why not rejoice ! "

Cypress, yew and rosemary were strewn upon graves till flowers took their place. The modern custom of sending costly wreaths is pretentiously vulgar. One reads with disgust of a gangster's funeral upon which £2,000 was expended on *floral tributes* ! Brand cites an ancient belief that flowers strewn upon graves prevented the ghost from walking. Our American cousins may have thought, reasonably enough, that no price was too high to pay to keep Diamond Jack quiet after his too active life.

Southey quotes part of the ritual used at the funerals of Greek Emperors : " Begone, O Emperor ! The King of Kings demands you. " This arouses conjecture. We are taught that all are equal in God's sight. And yet somehow the common belief lingers that an emperor is entitled to more consideration at the hands of Omnipotence than, say, a tinker. What, one wonders, do the emperors think about it ?

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*Time, common father, join with mother Earth,
And though you will confound, and she convert,
Favour this relique of divine desert,
Deposited for a ne'er dying birth.*

The practice of carrying the dead feet first is in striking reminder that we came into this world head first.

Rosemary, dew of the sea, was placed upon graves to preserve the bodies of the dead. It had decorative uses, crowning the boar's head at Yuletide and the wassail bowl. Because Mary spread with rosemary the linen of her Babe, it flowers in remembrance of Him upon the day of His passion. In Sicily fairies nestle under it disguised as snakes. Mixed with rue, sage, marjoram, fennel and quince it is held to be an *elixir vitae*. Mr. Skinner says :

" If a maid is curious as to her future, she may obtain information by dipping a sprig of rosemary into a mixture of wine, rum, gin, vinegar and water in a vessel of ground glass. She is to observe this rite on the Eve of St. Magdalen, in an upper room, in company with two other maids, and each must be less than twenty-one years old. Having fastened the sprigs in their bosoms, and taken three sips of the tonic " (one would be enough for me), " all three go to rest in the same bed without speaking. The dreams that follow will be prophetic."

§ VIII

OCTOBER will ever be a month dear to the traveller who abhors crowds. In November we shall adventure to Bristol, where Bristol Cream may serve to keep colds at bay. Meanwhile Somerset is still beckoning. I bespeak a leisurely survey of the villages within easy reach of Taunton, although the town itself

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—apart from the horror and romance of the Bloody Assize—is disappointing. Exmoor, the setting of the mighty Doones, has its own beguilements, with much less of the bleakness which chills on Dartmoor. An impassioned golfer need hardly be told to spend a day at Burnham-on-Sea. The Quantocks and the hills of Brendon hide hamlets kissed by Time and untouched by the jerry-builder. Your car, if you have one, will carry you swiftly across unattractive stretches of country, but, again, beware of excess speed. At Porlock and Dulverton the kings of Wessex had hunting palaces. Rare birds may be seen on Exmoor. The croak of the raven will startle you, if you have never heard that ominous sound before. The raven got its bad name from the legend that an old bird dines off a young one on Easter Sunday. There is the saw: “Nourish a raven and he will scratch out thine eyes.”

*Kill crow, pie, and cadow,
Rook, buzzard and raven,
Or else go desire them
To seek a new haven.*

I have no idea what bird is a cadow. Our lexicographers ignore him. The buzzard, so rare elsewhere, still nests in Exmoor's oaks. If the female dies, the male bird takes her place and brings up the young, devotedly. It is deemed unlucky to see first one magpie and then more, but two seen together denote marriage or merriment; three, a successful journey; four, an unexpected piece of news; five, you will shortly be in good company. A tame raven makes an amusing and intelligent pet. God fed the ravens; and one fed St. Paul, the Hermit, (not the Apostle to the Gentiles) during thirty years.

Dunkery Beacon, 1,700 feet above Severn's sea,

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should be climbed on a day when visibility is good. On its summit is a cairn, commemorating the spot where signal fires were lighted. The view from Dunkery is, as you may guess, panoramically superb.

The tall red deer browse on Exmoor; so do the diminutive ponies, sure-footed little beasties; but the grouse, which ought to thrive on the heather, pine and die. Across the Bristol Channel, not many miles away, they do well. They have ceased to be in the New Forest. Blackgame still breed in the bracken.

I am indebted to Mr. Walter Raymond for little-known information in regard to manor-houses. As he points out, it is necessary to know something of our feudal system. You find everywhere courts, manors, halls and granges. The abbeys and priories retained their titles after they were given away by Henry VIII. A "park" held deer, a right granted by the king. A castle belonged to some great overlord. A baron, owning a castle, would reward his knights and squires by giving them manors. To settle disputes a court might be held in a manor-house, and then, later on, it would be spoken of as such-and-such a court. Till I read Mr. Raymond's *History of Somerset* I believed that no house could properly call itself a court, unless a monarch had slept in it. The word hall is Saxon. Any house which included a large hall where business could be carried on might be spoken of as The Hall. One of the oldest houses in Wiltshire is known to-day as New House. Title was given to holders of manors under oath. The receiver of the manor knelt down, placed his hands within those of his lord and said: "Hear, my lord. I become liegeman of yours for life and limb and earthly regard, and I will keep faith

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and loyalty to you for life and death, God help me ! ” Whereupon the lord kissed his liegeman, and henceforth the lands granted to him belonged to him and his heirs for ever, provided the oath was kept. A grange means a barn or granary. The ancient granges belonged for the most part to the monasteries. I had not realized that William the Conqueror claimed and upheld his right to every acre in England. He divided the kingdom among faithful followers ; and they in turn, and under similar conditions of service and tenure, subdivided what was apportioned to them—*imperia in imperio* !

The farther you wander from the towns, the more naïve and yet shrewd you will find the villagers. Here are twin stories with a Zoomerzet tang to them, not, I hope, chestnuts.

A labourer, returning to his cottage, found his wife with her head in the gas-oven. “ What did you do ? ” asked the Coroner. The poor fellow scratched his head in bovine silence. “ You must have done *something*, ” said the Coroner. “ Ah-h-h well, yes, I did. I minds me I slipped a shillin’ into gas-meter. ” If this provokes tart criticism from the ladies, the second story may soften acerbity. A woman went into the barn to find her husband hanging from a beam. Again the Coroner asked : “ What did you do ? ” The widow replied : “ Nawthen. ” The Coroner persisted : “ Come, come, surely you ran for a neighbour to get help to cut him down ? ” The widow hesitated : “ Look see, if I’d ha’ done tha-at, an’ if they had ha’ cut ’un down, he might ha’ come to, zo, as I tells ’ee, I did nawthen. ”

If you happen to meet the “ broom-squires ”, the gypsies of Somerset, you will find them better com-

pany than the gypsies of the New Forest and better-looking. All gypsies were banished from England during the reign of Henry VIII. They drifted back. As I have said before it is difficult to believe what they may choose to tell you of their peculiar history. Vagabonds they are, but not necessarily rogues. Are they, or are they not, Egyptians, Pharaoh's People, driven out of Egypt by the Turks? The Romany names for "water", "fire", "hair" and "eye", are in Egypt *pani*, *ag*, *bal* and *ankhi*, in England *pani*, *yog*, *bal* and *yok*. The Welsh gypsy talks a Romany dialect unintelligible to broom-squires. Much of our folk-lore is said to come from them, but those who have abandoned the tent for the caravan have abandoned also many of the older customs. So long as they keep their tempers, they are invariably courteous; and I have often wished that I could get beneath a crust (indurated by harsh treatment) of seeming indifference, disdain and an aloofness impressively Oriental. As horse-copers—I speak from experience—they are past pluperfect masters of every trick known to the trade. They are excellent farriers and born musicians, but as a gaffer remarked to me long ago: "You'll never get no forrarder wi' they."

It was near Dunster that I had an experience which delighted me. A personally conducted party of tourists disembarked from two chars-a-bancs. They pushed off afoot to see the Castle. I noticed that an elderly couple remained behind. We fell into talk. The man mentioned, I remember, that he and his wife were visiting England for the first time. He told me that he had retired from active business with, so I inferred, a moderate competence. He wanted to explore the Hardy and Blackmore parts of Wessex.

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This was an *open sesame* to my heart, and his wife appeared to be as keen as he. But she said quietly: "You know we're scared." "Of what?" I asked, arrested by her serious face. "Of seeing too much." I hesitated, picking my words. "If you feel that way," I said hopefully, "you won't." Before we parted, I set down an itinerary, which they accepted gratefully and which I hope was of service. Considered as birds of passage they were rarities. They had "fallen for" our West Country. The man hated Barnstaple and loved Bideford. His wife seemed to be overwhelmed by the "cuteness" of our villages. An illuminating remark must be recorded: "We have not made any reservations at hotels anywhere." I gathered that, like myself, they had elected fancy to be their guide. Cities apparently did not please them. The busy hum of trippers fell distressingly upon sensitive ears. So-called beauty spots were too often disappointing. Another remark indicated shrewd observation. "We love your little streams." I had a glimpse of the yellow Missouri. "In contrast to your huge rivers?" I asked. "Oh, no, but around here your streams are bank-high all the time. Our creeks dry up in hot summers." Would that I could recall other simple observations which indicated the lady's not easily expressed appreciation of what she had found charming. She hoped that she would have watercress for her tea, taken from some clear brook where the Doones might have gathered it. I have often wondered what happened when they returned to New England. Inquisitive neighbours may have sniffed at their abstentions. But I'm prepared to wager a modest sum that they took back lavender-scented memories of what their fellow-countrymen

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pass by too hurriedly. When I took leave, the lady said apologetically: "Our friends told us what we *ought* to see, but we decided that it might be better to please ourselves, even if we never come here again." I assured them that it was humanly certain that they would be pleased. I dared not add what lay on my tongue's tip: "You two wise persons ought to be exhibited at the Metropolitan Museum of New York as object lessons in the art of how not to do the wrong thing." I am sure that they did the real right thing and reaped an abundant reward.

§ IX

HALLOW E'EN is the vigil of All Saints' Day and falls upon the last day of October. It is popularly known as Nut-crack Night. The children in Widcombe neither crack nuts nor go to bed with a pippin under their pillow, but in the Mendips and the Quantocks some of the ancient rites may be yet observed.

In Scotland it was customary to light bonfires, and the ashes therefrom were arranged in the form of a circle. A stone was then placed in the circle by each ritualist. If a stone was moved during the night, the person representing that stone would not live for twelve months from that day. On Hallow E'en a border maiden may wash her sark and hang it over a chair to dry, taking care to tell no one what she is about. If she lie awake long enough she will see the form of her future husband enter the room and turn the sark. Knotting the garter, three knots to be tied in the left garter in silence, is embalmed in verse :

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*This knot, this knot, this knot I knit,
To see the thing I ne'er saw yet—
To see my love in his array,
And what he walks in every day ;
And what his occupation be,
This night I in my sleep may see.*

*And if my love be clad in green,
His love for me is surely seen ;
And if my love is clad in grey,
His love for me is far away ;
But if my love be clad in blue,
His love for me is very true.*

Here is a recipe within the scope of even an indifferent cook : Take four, five or eight onions, name them after your lovers, place them near the chimney, the first that sprouts will be your husband.

The apple charm (still practised, so I'm assured) is as simple as the preceding : Men and maids tie an apple to a string and twirl it in front of a hot fire. The owner of the apple that first falls from the string is on the point of marriage, and, as the apples fall successively, the order in which the others of the party will attain to matrimonial joys is clearly indicated. Single blessedness will be the lot of the one whose apple is the last to drop.

Lean quotes Gay, in his *Shepherd's Week*, for the apple-pips test.

*This pippin shall another trial make,
See from the core two kernels brown I take ;
This on my cheek for Lubberkin is worn,
And Boobyclod on t'other side is borne.
But Boobyclod soon drops upon the ground,
A certain token that his love's unsound,
While Lubberkin sticks firmly to the last,
Oh ! were his lips to mine but join'd so fast !*

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Burning the nuts (hence Nut-crack Night) is another charm not yet disdained. Lasses and lads name each brace of nuts as they lay them in the embers. According as the nuts burn quietly together or start from beside one another, so will be the course and issue of courtship.

If a maid eats an apple alone, peering the while into a looking-glass by the light of a candle, *and combing her hair*, her true love will be seen peeping over her shoulder.

This is taken from a chap-book : " Get two lemon peels, wear them all day, one in each pocket ; at night rub the four posts of the bed with them ; if the maid is to succeed, the person will appear in her sleep, and present her with a couple of lemons ; if not, there is no hope."

The maid who is handed the lemon to-day does not get the man.

There are other customs connected with Hallow E'en, but I have presented the most popular and amusing.

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November

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November

§ I

ALL Saints and All Souls usher in a month dear to lovers of hound and gun. My guns are in their cases, my hunters are sold, so I can turn my attention to books piled high beside an easy chair. Long ago I recall a New Forest character who expressed amazement because I was playing golf in November in a gale of wind and rain. I attempted to portray him in *Leaves from Arcady* as "Uncle". Uncle followed our hounds afoot, and was no fair-weather sportsman, but I offended his sense of the fitness of things. "Do 'ee pleasure yurself", he asked, "in sech downscramblin' weather as never was?" I evaded a question which happened to be bothering me at the moment. "What would *you* do?" I demanded. He grinned. "Ah-h-h! You knows what I'd do, if I was a genelman: I'd find me a snug chimbley carner an' a tankard, an' keep me wits dry an' me throat wet."

Seasonable advice.

Time was, on All Souls' Day, when persons dressed in black, and ringing a bell, went round our towns calling upon the inhabitants to remember the torments of the dear deceased in purgatory, and to join in prayer for the repose of their souls. Having performed this pious duty, they assembled at the nearest tavern,

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where they gave attention to spirits not beyond the veil.

St. Luke's summer this year has been a series of sullen, depressing days. Let us pray that St. Martin may be more considerate. The sparrows, perching upon the sills of the dining-room windows, are hinting that food is likely to be scarce. We don't feed birds so long as Nature provides food, but, as winter approaches, we notice that the sparrows in particular become more pertly friendly. We have many wag-tails, but they, for reasons best known to themselves, hop about twenty yards farther off than the sparrows. If you feed animals, very soon they stop to make any sustained effort to feed themselves, an appalling thought if you consider millions on the dole hanging about like the cattle in the fields, bunched up, waiting for the ration of hay to be forked out.

The Fifth of November means now little to anybody except the small boys who love playing with fire. Treason is a word that has dropped out of common use. Guy Fawkes may yet be canonized by our Reds. More unlikely things have happened.

A friend of ours, a sometime parson, told us yesterday of a curious instance of land tenure. The squire of the parish met the parson and suggested that it would be kind and tactful if he suggested to an old parishioner the *expediency* of dying beneath her own roof-tree, because, if she didn't, her freehold (I may be using the wrong legal terminology) would revert to him. The parson then learned that formerly a squatter could take up a small bit of land between hedge and highway provided he erected a chimney on it during the course of one night. And this had been

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done by the predecessor of this old woman. But, if any life tenant of such property died in a house other than his own, land and cottage reverted to the lord of the manor, who had no wish to dispossess the old woman's son. The squire also urged upon his parson the propriety of pointing out to the son, that it was high time he married, because again, by some whimsical (or ancient) law the right to the freehold lapsed if there was no heir of the deceased's body. The parson called upon the old lady who reassured him : she had no intention of dying away from home. She appeared, however, to resent the implication that she might die soon. Then the parson touched upon the other matter. "Isn't it about time that your son, Granny, took to himself a wife?" The old woman shook her head: "I don't hold wi' they hussies a traipsin' about wi'out hair on head, wi' legs a-showin' so shameless, an' sech skillingtons as a man dassn't squeeze 'em fur fear o' hurtin' hisself." "But," said the parson, "you know as well as I do that there are good, respectable, hard-working girls in this parish." The old woman said obstinately: "Anyways, my Garge bain't marriage-ripe, plenty o' time fur tha-a-at, I tells 'un." "How old is George?" asked the parson. Granny paused. "Garge," she answered, "be no more'n sixty-five." The parson smiled. "Would it be indiscreet to ask your age, Granny?" The old woman smiled in her turn. "I be ninety-two come Martinmas!"

I enjoyed this story because it indicated kindly feeling on the part of the lord of the manor. He had no wish to exercise his *droits de seigneur*. Granny did die beneath her own roof-tree; "Garge" has not yet married. No squatter to-day could acquire title to

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land (this may have been common land) by building a chimney between sun-down and sun-up.

§ II

TALKING about universal suffrage and how it is likely in the future to affect England, my brother said that it might mean a victory for the weak, the weak-witted being an overwhelming majority. Then we laughed over a story which we had forgotten, because it happened when we were young men living in California. It has a heartening climax. I was honorary secretary of a small club. Visiting Englishmen were accorded a week's membership, because, as a shrewd Down-Easter pointed out, that act of courtesy made it possible and indeed obligatory for the visitor within our gates to return our hospitality. A small bumptious Englishman became a temporary member. To my annoyance, inasmuch as I introduced him to the club, he bored the older members by bragging in and out of season of his successes, especially with the ladies. He was a clever little cad. One evening, when we were refreshing ourselves at the club-bar, a tall, thin, silent gentleman, the son of a pioneer, addressed the little Britisher :

" Say, you come out on top *every time*. Isn't that so ? "

My fellow-countryman made a gesture.

" Wal, sir, you remind me of a little feller who might be your twin-brother. He was as small as you air, light-complected, gingery, full o' snap——"

My fellow-countryman expanded his chest, as the speaker paused dramatically.

" Full o' snap," repeated the little man.

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“ Yes, sir, full o’ snap an’ pepper, afraid o’ nothing on God’s green earth——”

The little man smiled and lit a fresh cigar.

“ He come into *The Olive Branch* where I was playing a game o’ cards. Our bar-keep was a big feller, who could strike a three hundred pound wallop. An’ Gosh! I’m darned if this little hop-o-me-thumb, not an inch taller than you, didn’t march up to that mining-camp bar and order a lemonade. Yes, sir, that’s what he done; he ordered a lemonade. You kin believe me when I say that every man in that bar admired his impudence. Wal, the big bar-keep said quietly: ‘ Go home to Mommer, sonnie. Lemonade ain’t served in this yere saloon.’ Did that little man wilt? He did not. He looked that big shoulder-striker squar’ in the eye, and brought down his baby fist, not a mite bigger’s yours, *with a bang!* ‘ You serve me a lemonade,’ he says. And I tell you that every man in *The Olive Branch* sat up and took notice _____,”

The little man said sharply :

“ That lemonade was served.”

“ No, sir, it was not. The big bar-keep stretched out a great hairy hand and took that little man by the bosom of his pants. Then he walked round the saloon and jest dusted the cobwebs off the ceiling with that measly little runt, and then he chucked him into a corner. I’ve spun this yarn because it serves to show that in this world the victory ain’t always to the—*weak.*”

The little man left our cow-town next morning, and we never saw his face again.

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§ III

I RETOLD this story to my brother, and we both laughed. Ought a man to laugh when he is telling a funny story? We agreed that it was permissible if the other fellow knew the story and was the first to laugh. Otherwise the Mark Twain method is best. A man told me a story, and was so stricken with laughter that he became inarticulate and, when he came to the point, I too was in fits of laughter because I hadn't the remotest idea of what tickled him. He, not his story, had tickled me.

After all it is a matter of personality. Mark Twain's stories—and I have listened to some of them—gained in the portentous telling; but, on the other hand, the raconteur who twinkles a merry eye, even before the yarn begins, arouses an expectation which such a man as my old friend, Seymour Hicks, most abundantly satisfies. Still, the laughter of the gifted raconteur should be reasonably controlled.

I am feeling sad because so soon my visits to our Public Library will come to an end. The assistants have been smilingly ready to help me. It is satisfactory to set down the fact that this public service is appreciated in Bath. The Reference Library, a silence room, attracts many Bathonians, mostly, I regret to add, men and women of middle age. The young people, probably, have something more exciting to engross their energies. They, so I'm informed, make good use of the lending department. It is discouraging to learn that books on yesterday are not in much demand. Many of these, admirably written, bear signs of little use. As President of the Dickens Fellowship I was heartened to discover that our greatest

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novelist is as popular as ever. Thackeray appears to be in temporary eclipse. Anthony Trollope and Jane Austen are not neglected. But here again what applies to Bath does not necessarily apply to, say, Birmingham. If information upon what is read could be collected (and collated) from every public library in the kingdom, it would be instructive, because then we should know whether the standard of popular taste is rising or falling. In Bath it is rising.

I have a notion that the truest of England's lovers are gardeners. They say little, possessed of God's greatest gift—silence. But it is the business of their lives to enrich the soil; and, daily, hourly, they are in intimate contact with it. The fight *à outrance* against weeds, slugs, snails and innumerable pests is interminable. This must affect the character. Anyway it calls for powers of observation of no mean order, and it kindles love not merely for flowers and plants, but, as I say, for the actual soil itself, Mother earth, so generous if you treat her generously.

§ IV

THE great St. Martin, the Glory of Gaul, was a Tuscan renowned for his learning and sanctity, who became pope of Rome in A.D. 649. He is best known to the man in the street as the saint who divided his cape with a beggar. The saint's half of his cape, or *chape*, became one of the holiest relics in France, and was carried by French monarchs into battle, thereby assuring victory to them. The words "chapel" and "chaplain" are derived from St. Martin's *chape*.

His day falls upon the 11th of November.

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I found in Chambers' *Book of Days* a literary curiosity, a "palindrome" in Latin composed by his Satanic Majesty. St. Martin was journeying to Rome, afoot, when Satan appeared and jeered at a bishop for not having a coach. The Saint immediately turned Satan into a mule, leapt nimbly on his back, and urged him to top speed. This provoked the famous palindrome :

*Signa te signa, temere me tangis et angis ;
Roma tibi subito motibus ibit amor.*

"Cross, cross thyself, thou plaguest and vexest me unnecessarily ; by my exertions thou wilt soon reach thy beloved Rome."

I cannot find out when a few brief days in November were called St. Martin's Summer.

Old Parr was buried in Westminster Abbey on the 15th of this month, 1635. Before his death he had an interview with Charles I, who is reported to have said : "You have lived to a very great age. What have you *done* during all these years ?" Parr replied : "I have done penance for my sins, sire." The old gentleman remained a bachelor till he was eighty. He married for the second time when he was one hundred and twenty ! Did this provoke the tag : "A man who marries a second wife doesn't deserve to lose the first ?" A few lines of doggerel, written after his death, may explain his longevity :

*He was of old Pythagoras' opinion
That green cheese is most wholesome with an onion,
Coarse meslin bread, and for his daily swig
Milk, butter-milk, and water, whey and whig.
Sometimes metheglin, and by fortune happy,
He often sipped a cup of ale most nappy.*

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"Meslin" is coarse bread made of different flours. "Whig" is a sort of whey. Parr, apparently, lived simply. A centenarian, who passed away recently, was asked on his hundredth birthday to what he attributed his great age? He replied humorously: "I don't know; I have practised immoderation in all things, and I've never called in a doctor."

St. Rumald, another November saint, was a Northumbrian king's son, who, as soon as he was born, exclaimed loudly three times: "I am a Christian". Chambers, not Alban Butler, cites this miracle and goes on to speak of an image of the saint long revered at Boxley in Kent, presumably before the Dissolution. A child of seven could lift it without effort, but the moving thereof was made the condition of women's chastity. However, according to Fuller, naughty ladies who paid well the priest in charge lifted the image as easily as did the children, whereas many chaste virgins and wives retired covered with confusion because they forgot the curator's fee. Fuller concludes piously: "Thank God! we live in times of better and brighter knowledge." Do we? Credulity is still rampant; "graft" flourishes. It is, perhaps, as well that St. Rumald's image has disappeared; it must have been a source of anxiety to some of the ladies of Kent.

§ v

MANY visitors to Bath leave the West Country without paying their respects to Bristol, because that ancient city is associated with wealth, as if wealth had not even more than its due share of romance. Parts of Bristol are not inviting to the eye,

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some of the slums near the docks, but we may be sure that Mr. Thomas Burke would cast a glamour over them. I must leave out what may be found in any guide-book. *The Annals of Bristol*, three solid tomes dealing faithfully with four centuries, may be commended to the pilgrim in search of what is not in the guide-books. I confess that the street named *Wine Street* allured me, not to mention the *Parade of St. Augustine*. Also, I have an enduring love for Bristol pottery and porcelain and Old Bristol glass (not excluding pre-Phylloxera clarets still to be found in magnums in the famous Harvey cellars in Denmark Street). The Harveys, benefactors of the human race, have bestowed upon us Bristol Cream and Bristol Milk. It is safe to assert that no Prohibitionist, after sipping these aged and miraculously blended sherries, could remain a Pussy-footer.

There is a legend connected with the Suspension Bridge which I like to think is true. In the days of crinoline a lady attempted to commit what our gaffers call "susancide" by jumping off the bridge, two hundred and seventy-five feet above low water. Her crinoline functioned as a parachute. The lady was hauled out of a mud-bank, none the worse for her misadventure! But I wonder that afterwards she survived the shame because her Victorian underclothing and underpinning were so exposed to view. The Avon gorge is magnificent.

As late as 1767 negroes were sold in Bristol. I found this advertisement: "To be sold a negroe boy about ten years old. *He has had the small-pox!*" Another boy of fifteen, very black, could wait at table. These little niggers wore silver collars round their necks engraved with their owner's name!

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Try to think of Bristol, once Bright-Stowe, or bright place, as Pope did, a city of "streets full of ships". In 1634, a ship-money tax was imposed of £6,500. From Bristol in 1497 sailed Sebastian Cabot, the first Englishman to discover that part of America later on colonized by us. A great gentleman adventurer was Sebastian Cabot, born in Bristol, *circa* 1477, a lively lad of twenty who lived to be a centenarian. A Bristol privateer brought home from Juan Fernandez Robinson Crusoe. I never knew that—and much else—till I went to Bristol before the war. The "*saucy Arethusa*" was built in this famous seaport which "swam on the waters". Let us admit that Bristol seethes with romance from Roman times up to the present day.

William Cannynge, also spelt Canynge, the founder of that superb parish church, St. Mary Redcliff, ought to be made the hero of an historical novel, but it would take a Scott or a Dumas to do such a subject of Edward IV justice. *Inter alia*, although a merchant prince of the first flight, he took upon himself the vows of priesthood to save himself from a second wife pressed upon his reluctant hands by no less a personage than the king. William married a blue-stockings, an ardent believer in one Thomas Norton, chemist and alchemist. It was hinted at the time when the rich ship-owner was building St. Mary's Church that "he built the church to conceal his commerce with the devil". Mr. Joseph Leech records this speech of William's in reply to a question put by an envious neighbour:

"You grow wealthy as a prince, good Master Cannynge. Is it true that you have discovered the Grand Secret?"

"Yes," replied Cannynge, "the grand secret of

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growing rich is to be industrious, to be honest, and avoid envy, and above all to give to God a portion of your gains. . . . Build, repair, or restore a church, and you will be sure to find the philosopher's stone amongst the materials of your pious munificence."

Meanwhile Joan Cannyng, the merchant's wife, believed that Thomas Norton had discovered the *Elixir Vitae*. She had his word for it, and she knew where the alchemist had hidden the priceless fluid. So she stole the bottle. William, in moments of depression, suffering horribly from his wife's hot temper and bitter tongue, consoled himself with the reflection that the lady might die before he did. Now that she had the elixir, there was no hope for him. Accordingly, so Mr. Leech affirms, he contemplated retirement to a monastery. Fortunately Joan Cannyng died, and her husband was chief mourner at her funeral. Joan died in a fit of temper. Taken ill, she flew to the stolen bottle. The bottle was there, but the waters were gone. St. Mary, incensed by the wife's efforts to prevent William from spending so much money on the church, had dried up the elixir!

The second wife pressed upon him by the king was a fair Mistress Roday, who certainly would have failed to lift the image of St. Rumald. But the monarch, when it was suggested that a merchant prince might disdain his leavings, exclaimed testily: "Is not a king's discarded mistress a mate for a wealthy burgher, any day?" Cannyng thought otherwise; he took the vows of celibacy, became Dean of Westbury, died, and now lies in peace beside his wife, Joan. Is not this a plum ripe for Miss Marjory Bowen's plucking?

The Cannyng effigy is in remarkable preservation. One glance at his fine, firm face, so beautifully modelled,

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served to remind me that George Canning, the statesman, was lineally descended from William's brother, Thomas.

The unhappy Chatterton was born in Bristol, in 1752, the son of St. Mary's sexton. He forged certain documents purporting to have been found by him in an ancient coffer in St. Mary's Church. It is sad to relate that he died insane, cursing his birthplace. He was educated at the Colston School.

Bristol claims among her many sons Burke, Southey, and Coleridge. Burke was born in Ireland, but he represented Bristol in Parliament. Coleridge was a Devonian, who owed much to Bristol. Southey was born in 1774 at Number 11, Wine Street. Two of Bristol's daughters stand out in striking contrast: Hannah More, who kept a school, and one of her pupils, the lovely "Perdita" (Mrs. Robinson). What the exemplary Hannah thought of Perdita may be imagined! Sir Thomas Lawrence was born in Bristol in 1769, of humble parentage. He is said to have drawn portraits in crayon of eminent personages when he was but six years old.

In the cathedral, in the north transept, you will find the Colston Memorial Window. Colston was honourably known in his lifetime as The Philanthropist, and a "Worthie" worthy indeed to be ranked with William Cannyng. Joseph Leech has a delightful story of him and a merry widow. At a wedding breakfast where Edward Colston was the most honoured guest, a saucy young widow, a Mistress Fell, urged the old bachelor to tread, and that right speedily, the path that leads to Hymen's altar. The philanthropist replied with great dignity: "Every widow is my wife and every orphan is my child." That same night, as

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he sat alone in his stately house in Small Street, his servant told him that an unknown lady wished to see him. Mr. Colston found her hooded and in tears. Courteously he demanded her name. She rose, flinging back her hood, revealing the pretty face of Mistress Fell. "I am your wife—your acknowledged wife, Edward Colston," said she.

"I have never acknowledged you or anyone else, Madam, as my wife."

"You did, you did, this morning. I am a widow, and I claim my husband according to his own word. Edward Colston never goes back on his word."

But the philanthropist ushered her out of his door, grievously offended. He removed to Mortlake shortly afterwards, because, so Mr. Leech hints, all Bristol laughed over the story.

It is a pity that Leech's little book, *Romances from Bristol*, is out of print, because it deals amusingly with Bristolians whose names are not forgotten in Bristol. The great earls of Berkeley lived hard by. Here is an authentic record that may be preserved in the muniment room at Berkeley Castle.

A.D. 1532, Jan. 22. *Thomas (5) Lord Berkeley died. He was at first buried in Mangotsfield Church, but removed, as he had requested, in eight months, and re-interred with his wife Eleanor, under the arch between the North Aisle and the Elder Lady's Chapel, St. Augustine's Bristol.*

Why did this nobleman order his body to be placed for eight months only in Mangotsfield Church? Now Thomas had married the lovely daughter of a Bristol merchant. This lady happened to incur her lord's wrath. He addressed her as follows:

"Madam, I will teach you to use more becoming

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language to your liege lord and husband. I hereby declare that for eight months I shall not share your bed or your society."

Hardly had he so pledged himself when he regretted the rash vow. He had sworn by Heaven and the Blessed Virgin, but a clever wife reminded him that he had not said *when* his vow was to be carried into execution. Years passed ; the lovely lady was smitten with a pestilence and died. The vow had been unfulfilled. At length the lord of Berkeley lay upon his death-bed. He confided to his father confessor his uneasiness, and his anticipation of purgatorial pains. The holy father spoke :

"God is merciful, my son. He has revealed to me how without pain or grief to yourself the hasty vow may be performed."

"Reveal it, good Father ; and I will leave such a behest that the altars of Berkeley shall want neither waxlight nor incense to the end of time."

"For eight months, my son, you must lie alone. Then you can be removed to the tomb of your wife, and thus you will have fulfilled your untoward vow and appeased the Virgin's anger."

§ VI

MOST people know that one Mistress Bloomer gave her name to garments painfully familiar to us when ladies first rode astride on bicycles. Do they know that a Bristolian, who represented his native city in 1362, gave his name to that warm, light, indispensable adjunct to our beds—the blanket ? The *Century Dictionary* is not aware of this. Shakespeare, who uses the word, may have heard the story.

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Bristol, in the fourteenth century, was the hub of the woollen industry, and Edward (one authority speaks of him as Thomas) Blanket happened to be an obscure manufacturer of woollen goods. He and his wife went to bed on a bitterly cold night. They lay awake shivering beneath an insufficient "camlet". In the bedroom was a piece of soft, unfinished, loosely woven cloth. Edward leapt out of bed and covered himself and his wife with the cloth. They slept well and soundly. Next morning Edward exclaimed: "Let others devote themselves to making cloth to keep them warm by day; be it my business henceforth to manufacture only that which will keep folks warm by night."

Very soon, this quick-witted burgher had six looms instead of two. He achieved fame, fortune, and a seat in Parliament.

Still, one must add, regretfully, that a coarse white cloth was known as *blanket*, or *blanchette*, two centuries before this gentleman's time.

I wonder if the Wizard of the North, before he wrote *Ivanhoe*, had ever heard of a Bristol Jew named Abraham, rich and possessed of a beauteous daughter called Rebecca? King John (another coincidence) demanded ten thousand marks of Abraham, which he refused to pay. The King ordained that Abraham should lose one tooth *per diem* till the money was paid. The Jew stood the loss of seven teeth, most painfully extracted, and then, having but one left, produced the ducats. This story has an apocryphal ending. A young Jew loved Rebecca. Abraham, still rich, refused to give his only child to an impecunious suitor. Enraged by the youth's importunity, Abraham exclaimed savagely: "Thou shalt have my daughter, when thou fillest my mouth again with good teeth."

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The youth withdrew ; he came back, six months later, with a set of white-enamelled artificial teeth which, strangely enough, fitted Abraham's jaw. He thus won the maid. Accordingly Bristol claims that the first set of artificial teeth was designed and made by a Bristolian. My own dentist, a Bathonian, refuses to accept this claim as credible.

§ VII

THE charm of Bristol is as the charm of a garden in November. It is not in sight, if you except the cathedral, the Old Dutch House, St. Mary Redcliff, and Bristol Cream. At the risk of offending Bristolians, who, to a man, stand stoutly by the ancient seaport, candour compels me to add that you have to search for food which, so Mr. John Fothergill of *The Spread Eagle* at Thame observes, "tastes like food". That struck me as a happy phrase inasmuch as food, if you take it by and large, even in hotels who write the bill of fare in French, tastes and *smells* like everything except food. For my sins I lunched not long ago in a popular restaurant. A girl with nice, bright eyes waited on me, so I ventured to ask her if she had seen anything on the floor. "Have you lost something, sir?" she asked. "Yes," said I, "my palate." She looked puzzled, as she suggested that I might perhaps have left it in the gents' cloak-room. I made another essay, hoping to surprise a dimple in a pretty cheek. "You have a lot of people here?" "Oh, yes, we're generally full up at lunch-time." "But do tell me," I urged, "does anybody come twice?" That evoked a giggle; and I saw the dimple. But, very seriously, she assured me that many people lunched there every

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day, a statement which begot a thought similar to the remark made by Tennyson to Henry Labouchere, after seeing for the first time (and last) one act of a musical comedy: "Henry, I am beginning to despair of my fellow-countrymen."

I could spend happily a full calendar month in Bristol, if two hours each day were passed in the museum and library; and then I should like to dine with or entertain at dinner some "worthie" cut to the Colston or Cannyng pattern. Bristol has a soul, but you can't ask the first constable where it is. It has a heart, too, big as a bullock's, and not stuffed with sage and onions. You must find soul and heart for yourself, and the quest is worth while. It often occurs to me that things generally are made too easy for the Neo-Georgians. You ask and you receive; you knock and the door is flung wide open. But what you "get" is hardly worth the getting, like the cheap chocolate in penny-in-the-slot machines.

§ VIII

WOULD that I had space to write about the Old Bristol Potteries. Mr. W. J. Pountney's noble book on that fascinating subject is well known. The frontispiece, displaying a polychrome bowl, dated 1709, makes my mouth water, and excites that acquisitiveness common to all collectors. There are still traces of these pottery works, nothing more. The Brislington Delft Ware is delightful. It is difficult to believe that it was made a century before our Chelsea porcelain. You can gloat over these specimens of fine craftsmanship in the Bristol Museum. Porcelain works were established in 1750. Lowdin's Glass-house was

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in existence about the same time. There were pottery works between Bread Street and Cheese Lane. The Bristol nomenclature whinnies for an essay from the pen of Mr. E. V. Lucas. William Fildes flourished about a century ago. Raby produced wonderful flower-in-relief decoration in parian upon earthenware. Gladstone's offer of £60 for a specimen of Raby's work was refused. I own a lovely bit of hard paste "*Boy with a Lamb*", modelled by "Tebo", or Thibaud, and have been looking for thirty years for the companion shepherdess.

To the collector Bristol is still a happy hunting-ground. Apart from treasure-trove there is the agreeable task of "locating" (hateful word) the sites of houses long pulled down. Such hunting, admittedly, does not appeal to the ordinary traveller, but he will find, if he tries it, a fresh zest, and an ever-increasing understanding of the latent charm of Bristol. The tombs of the Bristol Worthies quicken in me a desire to know more about them. And such knowledge is hidden in Bristol itself. The punning epitaphs call for a note-book. Upon a tablet above the Ash family vault in St. Michael's was (or is) this:

Rak'd up in ashes here doth } ASH { *remain*
In hope that ashes shall be } { *again.*

The epitaph of Sir William Penn, in St. Mary Redcliff, has a quaint conceit. He was the father of the famous quaker, Penn of Pennsylvania, and himself an admiral in our Royal Navy. It is recorded that he "made for his end with a gentle and even gale, in much peace, arrived and anchored in his last and best port."

I have lingered longer than I intended in Bristol

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and must now take leave of this last, if not best, port, still thinking of the best sherry therein.

§ IX

ONE of the four great Virgins of the Latin Church is St. Cecilia, who is also in our calendar.

. . . *Divine Cecilia came,
Inventress of the vocal frame ;
The sweet enthusiast.*

I had to commit to memory Dryden's lines as a small boy, and lacked the wit to ask why, later on, Timotheus raised a mortal to the skies, and why Cecilia drew an angel down? Small wonder that I ranked Macaulay as our greatest poet!—I could understand the brave Horatius, who partly reconciled me to my detested Christian name. Even when Alexander assumed the god, nodded, and shook the spheres, I remained indifferent, fearing to appear ignorant in the august presence of the Olympians.

St. Cecilia's Day falls on the 22nd of this month. She has inspired many painters and musicians, but she treated her husband, Valerian, rather shabbily. He married her in good faith, and must have been disconcerted when, unlike Eve, she turned from her fair spouse and refused the rites mysterious of connubial love. Valerian appears to have behaved as a perfect gentleman. Dan Chaucer, in *The Second Noynne's Tale*, speaks of the hair shirt beneath her bridal shift and her statement :

*I have an Angel which that loveth me,
That with gret love, wher so I wake or slepe,
Is redy ay my body for to kepe.*

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And then the Angel appeared. Chaucer tells the pretty legend. The Angel, when the hour of Cecilia's martyrdom came, would not suffer the executioner to sever her head from her body ; his dirty work was only half done. For three days the saint lingered on earth to speak of the joys of heaven. It is likely that Chaucer bestowed popularity upon Cecilia ; it is likely that her example filled with enthusiasm other lovely maids. But no commentator, so far as I know, certainly no prince of the Church, has suggested that Cecilia's ardour to live and die a virgin should have been discreetly disclosed to Valerian before instead of after the marriage ceremony. However, the point of the legend is that Cecilia's chastity converted Valerian, a pagan. He was baptized, and with him his brother, Tiburtius.

St. Cecilia's body was exhumed in 1559. She suffered martyrdom in A.D. 280. When the sarcophagus was opened, in the presence of several cardinals, she was found—so Cardinal Baronius testifies—" as one asleep, lying, not on her back, but on her right side, in a very modest attitude, covered with a simple stuff of taffety".

Nobody knows when, why, or how she came to be regarded as the patron saint of music. In the famous picture by Raphael she carries in her hands a small hand-organ. In the pictures, painted before the fifteenth century, she is portrayed without musical instruments.

The day of St. Catharine of Alexandria, a very mythical virgin and martyr, falls on the 25th of this month. I have alluded to her, and her wheel, in a previous chapter. I did not mention that she was the patron saint of spinsters, who fasted on her feast-

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day in the pious hope of thereby securing good husbands. Those who feasted instead of fasting called the merry-making "Catharning". I am told that this odd word is still in use. A little more than a hundred years ago a man dressed in women's clothes, with a large wheel by his side, was brought out of the royal arsenal at Woolwich and carried round the town. The tyrant Maximin, after failing to seduce Catharine, ordered her to be starved to death. Accordingly she was cast into a dungeon and left alone for twelve days. Angels ministered unto her. When the dungeon was opened, it was full of fragrance and light. Two hundred persons forthwith declared themselves Christians.

§ x

ST. ANDREW, the Apostle, patron saint of Scotland, keeps his festival on the 29th of November. In the parish of Easling, Kent, the villagers—so Hone records—assembled together, formed a lawless rabble, swept the neighbouring woods and, under the pretence of destroying squirrels, slew numbers of hares, pheasants and partridges. Hone does not tell us what the local magistrates and land-owners did in rebuttal. Nor do we get any inkling about St. Andrew's part in these low jinks and jollities. But I came across an inexplicable old saw: "*To Andrew all the lovers and the lustie wooers come.*" Again—when and where? Is he the patron saint of the Scots children who drift into our troublous world by a path other than that which leads to the altar? Let a Scot answer. Very little is known of the saint; he is not even mentioned in the *Acts of the Apostles*. The learned Dr. Smith *thinks* that he suffered crucifixion.

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§ XI

HONE has much that is enlightening to say about lotteries, a subject pat to the moment, because I have diverted myself with reading what potential winners of a first prize in the Irish Sweepstake would "do" with the ducats if Fortune favoured them. Is it a sign of the times that, with few exceptions, the contributors to a silly-season correspondence label themselves altruists? Hone cites the case of a footman to a lady of quality who disposed of the savings of twenty years in the purchase of two lottery tickets, and killed himself when he drew blanks, leaving behind a paper setting forth what he proposed to do with the five thousand pound prize, if he secured it. I quote it *verbatim* :

"As soon as I have received the money I will marry Grace Towers ; but, as she has been cross and coy, I will use her as a servant. Every morning she shall get me a mug of strong beer, with a toast, nutmeg, and sugar in it ; then I will sleep till ten, after which I will have a large sack posset. My dinner shall be on the table by one, and never without a good pudding. I will have a stock of wine and brandy laid in. About five in the afternoon I will have tarts and jellies ; and a gallon bowl of punch ; at ten, a hot supper of two dishes. If I am in a good humour, and Grace *behaves herself*, she shall sit down with me. To bed about twelve."

Did Grace mourn the loss of this swain ?

Henry Fielding, who wrote much of *Tom Jones* in this house, may also have composed the lines upon lotteries, recited at Drury Lane after the curtain was raised on his farce entitled *The Lottery* :

*A Lottery is a taxation,
Upon all the fools in Creation ;
And Heaven be prais'd,
It is easily rais'd,*

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*Credulity's always in fashion ;
For Folly's a fund
Will never lose ground,
While fools are so rife in the Nation.*

The first lottery in England was drawn on the 11th of January, 1569, at the west door of St. Paul's Cathedral, and continued day and night till the 6th of May. Dr. Chambers says that the object of any profits was the reparation of harbours and other useful works. Possibly the hospitals were not neglected.

§ XII

I MUST offer, with my benison, a recipe for November, something warming and seasonable, something too which does not exact the culinary skill of a *cordon bleu*, a satisfying dish with a relish to it, not—let it be plainly understood—food for the nursery. My brother suggests the Mexican *guisado*, or stew. A Mexican *vaquero* taught me the trick of it, but he, with his cast-iron stomach, loved lard. I have eliminated that.

You can use for this stew any cold meats in the larder—beef, mutton, fowl, game, or fish such as cod or turbot. The *salsa*, or sauce, is *the* thing. You compound that with infinite care ; in it the meat simmers for at least two hours, or longer, upon the slowest of fires. Potatoes, in their jackets, hot from the oven, can be served with it.

Prepare a *purée* of tomatoes, either fresh or canned, preferably fresh, rub it through a "tammy", and set aside. Slice thin a couple of large onions and fry them in butter till they are a golden brown. Fry separately an equal quantity of sliced carrots. Add onions and carrots, and a *fagot* of herbs to the *purée*

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of tomatoes. Stir continuously till the sauce is the consistency of gruel. Add two small lumps of sugar, a tablespoonful of Worcestershire sauce, and a clove of garlic, a small clove, prythee, because garlic when the stew is eaten must not reveal itself except to the hypersensitive palate of the epicure. Green chillies, so common in California, are a very important ingredient. If unprocurable, you can add, chopped up, the bottled red chillies, but, take note, it is the flavour of the chilli which is wanted, not its tropical heat. Remove seeds and fibres, taste each chilli before you add it to the sauce. If too peppery, reject it. Otherwise a severe attack of hiccups may overwhelm you. Failing both green and red chillies, you can add half a dozen drops, no more, of *tabasco* or a spoonful of fresh paprika. You must now taste your sauce, which should look hearteningly red. Do not forget that the gentle simmering will reduce it, as it should. Add last the meat, game, or fowl, and let the whole simmer till ready for the table. If you add fish, instead of meat, allow only ten minutes, because otherwise the fish will disintegrate into a mess. You will have carried out these instructions faithfully, if the *ragoût* when served is sticky.

Benedictus benedicat !

This is a luncheon dish seasonable upon a cold, sullen day. What is the right tippie to drink with it? I plump, unhesitatingly, for old Scotch ale, clear as amber, with a humming bead to it. The stew is so flavoursome that no *gourmet* would dare to present with it the nobler wines. Oysters might precede it. A crumbly Cheshire cheese should follow.

Believe me this recipe is worth the price of this book. But I entreat you, good Mistress Cook, not to

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fling into the sauce odds and ends of meats. Perhaps a fine chicken is best, not yet deprived of its wings and breast. Essay that first.

I commend a book recently given to me: *The Gourmets Almanach*, by Allan Ross Macdougall, published by Desmond Harmsworth. It is admirably and wittily written by, I'm sure, a *gourmet* not a glutton. He gives an old recipe for cooking in the pot a haunch of venison, which we shall try next year. The haunch, before cooking, is embalmed in a wondrous *marinade* which would make edible an old pair of shooting boots.

A propos, I have just skimmed through a novel written by one of our brilliant young men. I wonder if it has pleased the critical taste of Mr. Philip Guedalla. An aphorism of his is worth quoting: "People thought of the late D. H. Lawrence as having enlarged the scope of the modern novel. You might just as well talk of enlarging the scope of a house by taking the bath-room door off its hinges." In the novel I speak of the author has not enlarged its scope, although he has removed the door from another private room which he calls by its improper name. His youthful indifference to the inhibitions of his elders is not ingratiating, but I roared with laughter over one of many redeeming passages, describing the issue of boots to a battalion of black troops. It never occurred to these coloured gentlemen to wear the boots. They promptly cooked and ate them. This reminded me of a comical incident in American history: Uncle Sam, doubtless memorialized by ladies who spoke of legs as limbs, bestowed five hundred pairs of trousers upon some Red Indians, who paraded up and down the platform at Cheyenne, wearing little more than a gay blanket. The Indians donned the pantaloons after carefully cutting out the seats.

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§ 1

WINTER is upon us, I like the grim old fellow ; there's no nonsense about him. You don't have to waste time trying to determine whether or not you'll slip on a woolley ; you don't grudge an extra log on the fire, or abstain from a second glass of port. It is, indeed, the month of creature comforts too dear, no doubt, to the elderly. Soon my brother and I will fare forth on our annual pilgrimage to the Bath shops, where we shall have to resist the importunities of tradesmen attempting to force upon us wares we do not like. When we climb the Golden Stairs and St. Peter is doubtful about our claim to admission, we shall say : " We bought our Christmas presents a full three weeks before Christmas Day."

The selection of the right present is in itself a gift not bestowed upon the multitude. A friend of mine has an uncanny knowledge of small inexpensive articles sure to please others. Year after year he has given me something or other that I was on the point of buying for myself, and yet we live far apart. The letters to Santa Claus, laboriously written by American children and despatched, flaming, up the chimney, are indeed a grant-in-aid to parents. I suggested this method of acquiring information to the mother of half

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a dozen children living in what we call *Poverty Flat*. Her "kiddies", so she informed me, regard Santa Claus as a "furriner", but they believe firmly that an English Father Christmas parades the streets of Bath, which he does. This artful mother, taking into account the improbability of her children meeting the old gentleman, makes a point of asking them what they would demand from him if they did. And so the small stockings are miraculously and satisfyingly filled. My mother, I remember, was not up to such dodges. Our stockings were plenished when we were asleep. Next morning we played "swaps"; so all, in the end, was very well. I take this opportunity of urging my readers to join the Dickens Fellowship, which has now branches, active branches, throughout the English-speaking world. Our best work is done among the waifs and strays at Christmastide. The Fellowship, which has only been in existence for thirty years, is likely to become a great charitable organization, and every penny goes where it is needed. No better tribute could be paid to the memory of a man who during his busy life never once turned an indifferent ear to the misfortunes of others and fought valiantly to the end against injustice, tyranny, and meanness.

The children have first claim on our purses. Very expensive toys offered for sale exasperate me in such times as these. Most children prefer cheap toys. A fairy godmother presented my brother, when he was six years old, with a Harlequin on a tricycle, a triumph of mechanism which cost much money. My brother immediately removed from the toy a ball of lead which put the cyclist out of action. He took no further interest in Harlequin, but he carried about the ball

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of lead for several weeks, and eyed it as if it were the Koh-i-nur !

Still, I can't help envying the doting parents who spend ten guineas upon what I have just seen advertised in a Sunday newspaper as "A Party frock for a Tiny Tot". The tots—so they assure me—loathe being "poshed up", but Daddie and Mummie, no doubt, experience an uplifting glow.

§ II

I HAVE asked twenty of my contemporaries if they have tasted a posset. Pepys loved a good sack posset. So did Sir John Falstaff. Here is a recipe from the book of a Lady of Quality of the Reign of Queen Anne :

"Take a gill of sack" (sherry) "and put into your bason ; then take 10 eggs yolks and whites, beat them well, then run them through a hare sive to your sack. Sweeten your eggs and sack then set it on the fire to thicken stirring till you think it be thick enough ; then boyle a quart of good cream and power" (pour) "it as high as you can to your sack and eggs and stir it easely together. So let it stand a while and send it up. Looke it do not curdel."

When premonition of a cold assails you, stick your feet into hot mustard and water, drink slowly this posset, and so to bed. There will be no signs of a cold in the morning, but there might be biliary disturbance. Our Lady of Quality does not tell us whether this posset was served to one, two, or three persons. It seems a liberal ration for one.

I found a less alluring recipe in the *Century Dictionary* : "Take hot ale, milk, sugar, spices and sippets

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of bread, almost universal for supper on Christmas Eve."

Let us hope that the first posset was served to Sir John, after his disconcerting experiences at the hands of the Merry Wives of Windsor.

The recipes in my great-grandmother's book (1823) are good Christmassy reading, but would the modern lady of the larder have patience to deal with them faithfully. In one a small well-hung leg of four-year-old Welsh mutton is to be enthroned upon various herbs and braised. But it must be basted with cream and dripping for *six* hours——! I asked the goddess who presides over our kitchen to do this. *She did it.* It surpassed expectation, but I hadn't the heart (or courage) to ask her to do it again.

§ III

DECEMBER is an excellent month to overhaul one's books. I was lucky enough to inherit some two thousand volumes beautifully bound in morocco, calf, tree calf, and vellum. All leather needs nourishment, or it perishes prematurely. Mr. A. J. Symons, that ardent collector of first editions, told me to buy a large pot of saddle soap and another pot of saddle paste, to rub well in the soap, to let it dry, and then, with a brush, to polish the leather with the paste. The result has astonished us. Some of the bindings, thus treated, look as good as new. My edition of Dryden in eighteen volumes, bound in green morocco, published in 1808, smiles at me gratefully and youthfully. Incredible to believe that ordinary saddle soap and paste have wrought this miracle of rejuvenation! Each year there should be a clearance.

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And yet, so often, sentiment (or sentimentality) protests. Our prisons are glad to receive books and periodicals. I refuse to part with old friends who glance at me reproachfully when I pass them by. Perhaps they suffer from jealousy. It is sad to outlive our loves. Writing this book has sent me back to some of them, and I was touched to discover marks of my own not too clean but caressing boyish fingers. My grandfather, a true lover of books, instructed me how to handle them. I wince to-day when I see a guest "tearing" a volume from its appointed place. If he drops the book, homicidal instincts are aroused.

This book has engrossed my energies for the past year, although I began it more than three years ago, and have collected some of the material ever since we bought this dear old house where my brother and I have been so tranquilly happy. Bath is a sanctuary indeed for the middle-aged and elderly; there is a joyous air about its streets; St. Martin's summer hovers over it. Many people must have been happy in this house. Not being a psychic (is there such a noun?), I am unable to declare (as psychics do) that every old house has "atmosphere", but I believe it to be true. I know houses, charming in almost every way, but ordinary people can't live in them. They are haunted, not by ghosts, but by some malefic spirit or essence of evil. Long ago a lady of my acquaintance, no longer living, asked me to read a weighty script dealing with the houses of England which were accursed. She had collected, during a long life, an enormous quantity of material. I offered to take this script to my publisher. She shook her head. *Where is this script?* But, thinking the matter over and recalling the cases she cited, I am not surprised that

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publication was withheld. If defamation of character is a punishable offence, what applies to persons might apply with equal validity to places. The book I speak of, if accepted as a presentment of facts, would depreciate the value of at least twenty fine properties.

§ IV

WE are greatly excited over the prospect of owning once more a dog. Our last good companion and friend was brutally done to death, under my eyes, crushed beneath the wheels of a car going slowly, which the driver, whose grave may dogs defile, could have stopped in a couple of yards! When we buried our dog in the woodland garden, where he had raced about so joyously, we agreed that we dared not risk another life. A very big dog is comparatively safe. All terriers, however intelligent, run hourly risks. Terriers must be exercised. It is hateful to them (and to us) to keep them on a lead. Lap dogs, so dear to ladies, are an abomination to most men. Spaniels appear to be indifferent to danger, and its prey. What is a dog-lover to do under such nerve-shattering conditions? A wise kinsman enlightened us. "Get a bull-pup," said he. "My bulldogs never leave my premises; they get all the exercise they need in the garden. They are admirable watch-dogs, the terror of tramps and trespassers; they are comical fellows, affectionate, grateful and loyal to their owners. They belong to the hold-fast breed of England; they are not quarrelsome. . . ."

And so, we are going to have a bull-pup. A pup may outlive us. We had a kinswoman, a wonderful old lady, a niece of Sir John Moore, who could remem-

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ber the illuminations in London after Trafalgar——! She lived to be one hundred and one in full possession of her faculties. She buried two faithful butlers. She was ninety when she engaged a third of youthful appearance, saying to all of us: "I had to get a young man, my dears." I ventured to remind her of the old lady who bought a baby parrot in order to find out if there was any truth in the statement that parrots live to be centenarians.

§ v

IN my browsings among dusty tomes I came across something worth remembering when, at this season, people fall to talking about food. French *chefs*, as consummate artists, claim pride of place. Nevertheless one Harriet Dunn, an Englishwoman, *cooking in Paris*, was acclaimed by Frenchmen as the queen of all cooks. Peers extolled their plum-puddings as "Dunn" compositions! Miss (or Mrs.) Dunn flourished more than one hundred years ago. So, when an epicure flings at us the honoured names of Vatel, Ude, Soyer, and Escoffier we can retort suavely: "Please, don't forget Harriet Dunn!" Henri IV wanted to regale the English Ambassador with plum pudding. He procured an excellent recipe which he handed to his *chef*. Nothing was forgotten—except the cloth. The plum pudding was served in a tureen as soup. Our ambassador, so we are told, was too well bred to express any astonishment.

Is there a patron saint of cooks? Friar Tuck could tell me if he were here.

There are not many old customs particular to this month till we come to Christmas Eve. "Going a-good-

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ing" took place on the day of St. Thomas, the Apostle. Women begged money of men, and presented them in return with sprigs of palm and primroses. I have found primroses in December in our woods. In Warwickshire, on St. Thomas's Day, the poor begged corn of the farmers. They called this going *a-corning*. Lean has nothing to say about these two customs now obsolete. Nor can I connect them with the Apostle. Good days are often spoken of as "gaudy" days, a synonym likely to find favour with the girls who starve their bellies for pride of back.

Throughout these rambling chapters I have tried to glean information about saints whose names are so often on our lips, and of which most of us know so little. Dr. Smith says that Thomas's real name was Judas. Thomas, he points out, may have been a surname. This is an amazing conjecture, because surnames, as we understand the word, were not known in this country till long after the Norman Conquest. We think of the Apostle as the "Doubter", slow to believe the evidence of his eyes and something of a pessimist. Little authentic is known about him.

It amused me to find that "goodmorrrows" were a synonym for platitudes. "Then she spoke of the domestical kind of captivities and drudgeries that women are put to with many such goodmorrrows." Really a phrase worth remembering. "Good Day" north of Tweed is not a platitude but an inexactitude. Every shepherd, in a drenching Scotch mist, bids the passing wayfarer "Good Day". A Scot explained this to a mere Sassenach. "He means, poor devil, that he hopes, against the experience of a lifetime, that the day may yet be good." I replied feebly: "He ought to have said Goodmorrow."

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De Quincey died on the 8th of December, 1859. Few read him to-day, but I make no doubt that he will come to his own again. I possess a fine edition of his works, easy to handle, easy to read. Lovers of Hazlitt and Lamb ought to have an enduring affection for De Quincey. If he were alive to-day he would be a great thought-provoking influence, because his outlook on life is so speculative. He may have been regarded as the Aldous Huxley of his generation. His essay on *California*, written in 1852, during the gold-rush, is a masterpiece of wit, humour and, be it frankly admitted, imagination. Thirty years later, when I first set foot in San Francisco, there was the same comically optimistic spirit informing every son and daughter of the Golden West. De Quincey writes: "A friend of ours, not twelve miles from San Francisco, in digging for potatoes, stumbled upon a hamper of gold that netted forty thousand dollars. And, behold, the next comer to that locality went off in dudgeon because, after two days' digging, he got nothing but excellent potatoes. . . ." De Quincey denounces the "iniquity" of Lynch law. Nevertheless, as all Californians know, Lynch law established law in a lawless community. He is on firmer ground when he deals with the possibility of a glut of gold. I believe that if de Quincey were writing to-day, the adjective "brilliant" would be accorded to him by our critics. In December it is well to look back and reckon up what the previous months have bestowed upon us. One month bestowed on me a livelier appreciation of Thomas de Quincey. He, too, was a doubting Thomas, a passionate note of interrogation, endowed with a first-class brain.

In 1849, when gold was discovered in California,

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Mark Isambard Brunel died. Cliftonians have not forgotten the engineer of their Suspension Bridge, but his father's great achievement was the boring of the Thames Tunnel, that dismal wonder of London in my salad days. Brunel was an inventor of time-saving machines: one shuffled cards, another wound wool, a third copied letters. Dr. Chambers affirms that a study of the anatomy of that destructive worm, *teredo navalis*, suggested to the engineer the construction of a cast-iron shield which could bore like an auger. He patented a machine for doing this and set to work for the second time at the tunnel. After four years, when 600 feet of tunnel had been built, Father Thames reasserted his sovereign supremacy. Hood wrote this quatrain:

*Other great speculations have been nursed,
Till want of proceeds laid them on the shelf;
But thy concern was at its worst
When it began to liquidate itself.*

Finally, in 1843, the tunnel was opened to the public, and Brunel received the accolade. Commercially it failed, after costing nearly half a million. To-day we should call him a "card". He was comically absent-minded, forgetting his name, getting into wrong coaches, and was accused of mistaking other men's wives for his own.

But Sir Mark Isambard Brunel ought not to be lightly forgotten.

§ VI

THE talk turned the other night upon Beauty Parlours, and the millions spent therein. We were entertaining and being entertained by an old

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friend, whom I can speak of as a crowd rather than an individual. He has functioned as journalist, publisher, editor, bookseller, novelist, essayist, and critic. He is remarkable for his whimsical toleration of others and a Puck-like appreciation of life's little ironies. We discussed the ladies who refuse to grow old. We cited the mother who could vanquish her grown-up daughter at tennis, but had to admit that her own mother, approaching the Psalmist's span, could give "owe fifteen" to both of them! My brother spoke of another mother and daughter who dressed alike. The mother said gleefully: "You know I'm often mistaken for my little girl." Whereupon the little girl murmured: "It's funny, but nobody ever mistakes me for Mummie." The talk was relevant to this book, because we discussed "charm" and the differences between May and December. If December succeeds, at infinite expense and inconvenience to herself, in looking (with the light behind her) something like May, can she feel like May? Madame de Récamier and Ninon de l'Enclos are examples of what can be accomplished by women who laugh at time. The lovely Juliette (whose name was Jeanne) lived to be seventy-one. In her coffin her youthful beauty amazed everybody who beheld it. Like St. Cecilia, but not possibly actuated by the same motive, she was a wife in name only to Monsieur Récamier, a rich banker, twenty-seven years older than his child-wife. Juliette lay alone in a gorgeous bed borne by gilded bronze swans, surrounded by immense mirrors, and may have nearly died, like Narcissus, of her own sweet loveliness. Mrs. Stuart Erskine speaks of her as "cold". She warmed others, notably Benjamin Constant and that pessimist Chateaubriand, who spoke so drearily of "*la chambre*

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où ma mère m'infligea la misère de la vie". One gathers that the sprightly Juliette, although inordinately eager to excite admiration in men, loved herself and her own beautiful body. Ninon, a courtesan, but the friend of Madame de Maintenon and Molière, lived to be eighty-six, and was not cold. Now, if it be urged in defence of beauty parlours that a woman who preserves her beauty is a "draw" to the end of her days, will some high priestess from the temple of Venus explain the charm, equally enduring, of notoriously ugly women such as Madame de Staël, George Eliot and the Princess Metternich (with her *beauté du diable*)? We went into all this at length. Our guest held a brief for the woman of middle-age, who struggles desperately against wrinkles, a sagging chin, and crowsfeet. Certainly he excited pity and compassion, but he couldn't answer the question: "Is it worth while?" He evaded that query with a twinkle in his eye: "They think so." Well, I wonder. . . . There must be moments when December weighs comfort against discomfort and reflects that Spring is indeed very far behind. As a last shot from a depleted locker our guest observed: "You see these women are out to catch a young man, not men of their own age."

This brought to mind that mysterious and romantic personage, Beau Wilson, whom I had forgotten. I exhumed him out of *The Book of Days*. Beau Nash and Beau Brummel are with us still, Beau Wilson is lost to sight and memory. He became the talk of the town towards the end of the reign of William III. I should like to write a novel, or a play, about him and his amazing fortunes. Evelyn speaks of him as "civil and good-natured, but with no force of understanding". He had good nature enough to portion his

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sisters and to redeem his father's estate, being the fifth son of a very impoverished gentleman. *Where did he get his money?* He lived in style, his house was expensively furnished; his dress was costly; he dispensed a generous hospitality without any visible means of support! He was not a gambler. He kept, so Dr. Chambers records, a discreet tongue and left a scandalous world to conjecture what it pleased. How tongues must have wagged over the dishes of tea! It was believed that this young man had discovered the philosopher's stone. Then the end came suddenly. He fought a duel with John Law (promoter of the Mississippi Scheme), and, at the first pass, the Beau fell, mortally wounded. He died without speaking a word. Long after his death the truth, or what purported to be the truth, leaked out. This prince of *gigolos* (that shall be the title of the novel) had excited a passion of love in William the Third's mistress, the Duchess of Orkney, a woman twice his age. Incognita, this lady supplied her lover with ample funds on the twin conditions that he remained faithful to her and pledged himself to make no attempt whatever to discover her identity. The Beau died, leaving but a few pounds behind him. But a discarded confidante of the duchess, possibly a not too credible witness, testified afterwards that Law also was under her quondam mistress's *protection*! Hence the duel. We shall never know the truth, but it is said that Beau Wilson met the duchess by chance in St. James's Park, and that, then and there, she took charge of him and his fortunes.

An intriguing tale! I marvel that it escaped the net of Stanley Weyman, Henry Seton Merriman, or—to put back the clock still further—Harrison Ains-

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worth. It is possible that a novel has been written dealing with this dandy, but, if so, it has escaped my notice. Mr. Hugh Walpole might tackle it, and bring to it intimate knowledge of that period.

§ VII

I HOPE the Carol Singers are vocalizing, but I fear not. Anciently, bishops carolled among the minor clergy, who applauded as schoolboys applaud the japes of form-masters. There are an immense number of carols, and an increasing number of elderly gentlemen who are growing heartily sick of Good King Wenceslas. I should disburse silver instead of copper, if our carol singers exercised more discrimination in their selection of songs which, even if badly sung, might evoke honest laughter. Here is one culled from Hone :

*As it fell out upon a day,
Rich Dives sickened and died,
There came two serpents out of hell,
His soul therein to guide.*

*Rise up, rise up, brother Dives,
And come along with me,
For you've a place provided in hell,
To sit on a serpent's knee.*

Hone, commenting on this says: "Warwickshire believed that Dives *could* sit on a serpent's knee."

The earliest collection of carols was printed by Wynkyn de Worde in 1521. Carols are not sung in Scotland. Dr. Chambers gives what he thinks to be one which combines simplicity with melodiousness :

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*I saw three ships come sailing in,
On Christmas Day, on Christmas Day,
I saw three ships come sailing in,
On Christmas Day in the morning.*

*And all the bells on earth shall ring
On Christmas Day, on Christmas Day,
And all the bells on earth shall ring
On Christmas Day in the morning.*

*And all the angels in Heaven shall sing,
On Christmas Day, on Christmas Day,
And all the angels in Heaven shall sing,
On Christmas Day in the morning.*

There are six more verses. I have no wish to hear the bishop of the diocese singing them, but it would give me great pleasure if our choir-boys, setting the old words to the old tune, sang them on Christmas Eve in our courtyard where I make no doubt they were sung long ago.

§ VIII

THE Waits during the seventeenth century were watchmen who sounded horns.

*Where are the Waites? Go bid them play
To spend the time awhile . . .*

Waits are not mentioned by Pepys or Evelyn. When they ceased to be watchmen, they became itinerant singers wandering from door to door, as they do still, and demanding a few coppers cheerfully paid to get rid of them. Washington Irving mentions them in his *Sketch Book* as a band of musicians. They are often confounded with mummers. A company of waits was established at Exeter in the year 1400.

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They piped the watch, four times each night, between Michaelmas Day and Shrove Tuesday. Waits in Scotland have been spoken of as minstrels, who, during the last three weeks of December, wandered from house to house playing soothing airs upon violins. In Bath five men get together. Four play wind instruments and the fifth collects the cash. I fear that the end of the "waits" is measurably in sight.

The Mummers, with any luck, may survive them.

The decoration of houses at Yule-tide goes back to pagan times, when sylvan spirits repaired to them and remained unnipped by frost and cold winds. The word "Yule" signifies the winter solstice. The holly is first-cousin to the oak; ivy is a vintner's sign, and a plant sacred to Bacchus. Country maids believed that if they were not kissed under the mistletoe they would die spinsters. Yule-dough used to be made by bakers at Christmas, fashioned into the image of a baby, and presented to customers. Mince-pies appear to have symbolized the offerings made by the wise men. Of old a Christmas "pye" was constructed in the shape of a manger. Very often a luscious plum-porridge was served first. A superstition long prevailed in the West Country that on the eve of the Nativity, on the stroke of midnight, oxen were found on their knees. It is not surprising that mummers are still with us, because it was deemed, all over the kingdom, to be most unlucky to send them away unrequited. It was also deemed unlucky to bring holly or mistletoe into the house before Christmas Eve. Louis XI, most superstitious of monarchs, never undertook business on Childermas Day (the 28th of December), but Edward the Confessor laid the foundation stone of Westminster Abbey on that day. Lean states

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that if a maid at midnight on Christmas Eve goes into the garden and plucks twelve sage leaves without breaking the stalk, she will see her future husband. The custom may still prevail at Taunton of holding the Ashen Fagot Ball, in memory of the delight that King Alfred's men, coming up cold and hungry to the gathering before Ethandune, felt at finding ash-trees, common to the neighbourhood, which burn with ease although green.

§ IX

OUR birds in December, whether grateful or not for our ministrations, become more and more friendly. They "carry on" and carry off most comically. One wonders sometimes if they are not "showing off", as children do. Dogs soon learn to differentiate between "hand-outs". A spoiled pet rejects bread-and-butter and nibbles affectedly at plain cake. Our birds would as lief eat bread-crumbs as cake. Throw before them a few gentles and the crumbs are disdained. We were watching a thrush skilfully extracting worms, invisible to us, on the bowling green. A brace of starlings hopped about near him. They seemed to share our amusement when the thrush, attempting to tear a long thin worm out of the ground, fell backwards because the worm broke in two. The starlings encouraged the thrush to find the worms, and then annexed them. The thrush, poor innocent, submitted to these deprivations and went on working indefatigably for others. We spoke of him as the "boy scout". Our head-gardener, a very observant person, agrees with us that woodpeckers

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exhume pig-nuts, leaving on the lawn a clean-cut round hole about three inches deep.

I, with my long nails, will dig thee pig-nuts.

Caliban proffers this service to Trinculo. What is a pig-nut? The dictionary describes it as a "hawk-nut", the tuber of a common plant, *conopodium denudatum*. But children, I fancy, speak of the tuber of the buttercup as a pig-nut; and it has a sweet nutty taste. Our woodpeckers seek for that. No robin of our acquaintance dares to tackle a large lob-worm. He stares at it, shakes his head, and flies off. Then a thrush or blackbird appears and without more ado carries off the loot. Does the robin tell the thrush?

*Amidst the freezing sleet and snow,
The timid robin comes;
In pity drive him not away,
But scatter out your crumbs.*

*Soon winter falls upon your life,
The day of reck'ning comes,
Against your sins, by high decree,
Are weighed those scattered crumbs.*

Thus Mr. Alfred Crowquill, whoever he may be. But our robins are not timid. Bold as brass would describe one little fellow, a friend now of three seasons. He follows my brother about——! If he could talk I'm sure he would protest against his banishment from the up-to-date Christmas cards. These happy assurances that our old friends have not forgotten us are, year by year, more artistically designed—and more expensive. Perhaps they usurp the place of the letter. Some busy men (and women) keep a list of their acquaintances, hand the list to a secretary, instruct

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him to select a suitable design upon which is printed names and addresses, and dismiss the whole matter from their minds. I would sooner have a ha'penny card from a child with her name upon it written, often laboriously, by herself. Still, the other cards are an indication that the national taste is better than it was. I found in an old album cards of sixty years ago. Dives then thought sixpence quite enough for such a memorial ; McDives disbursed tu'ppence !

A Lord of Misrule directed the revels of the season. In our Inns of Court he reigned supreme from Christmas Eve till Twelfth Night, supported by his lord-keeper, his treasurer, his guards of honour, and his *chaplains*. Chambers says that one gentleman expended two thousand pounds in the exercise of his office and was duly knighted at Whitehall by Charles I. There is an engraving in the *Book of Days* of a Lord of Misrule carrying a fool's bauble as his badge of office. It is certain that he was accorded a licence which was bound, sooner or later, to extinguish both himself and his office. At his command all doors flew open. In fine, he enjoyed all the privileges of the ancient court jesters. What licence was given to them is gleefully related by Dougal Graham in his Chap-book. One Geordie was the fool of James VI of Scotland. The malignant party in Scotland sent a bishop to the king. Geordie was instructed to meet and salute him. He met his lordship on a bridge, cut off his head, and threw it into the river. He then hastened to the king, fell down before him, pleading most heartily for the royal pardon as without it he was a dead man. The king asked what he had done. Geordie replied that he had thrown a Scots' bishop's hat over the bridge, which made His Majesty laugh to hear pardon

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demanding for such a small fault, but the fool had no sooner obtained the king's pardon, than he said: "Indeed, my sovereign, I threw his hat over the bridge, but his head was in it." The king laughed and exclaimed: "O Geordie, Geordie, thou wilt never give over till thou be hanged."

It is likely that this story, if true, took place in 1594, when James quelled a rebellion of the Catholic Lords. From another anecdote in the Chap-book, I gather that Geordie accompanied his master to England, where he worsted in argument an English bishop.

I cannot find out when the turkey superseded the feudal Baron of Beef. It was my lot, when a boy at Harrow, to be asked to dine at a great house where the ancient ritual was observed. Four stalwart footmen, in gorgeous liveries, marched into the dining-room on Christmas Day bearing aloft a huge pewter dish upon which the baron sat enthroned. A boar's head with an orange between his teeth thrilled me. I don't recall swan or peacock. I am sure that no turkey figured on the bill of fare. My host died, full of years and honours, in 1881. Mr. Gladstone said of him that one of the last of the great country gentlemen had passed away, a notable tribute because the two men, although friends, were opposed to each other in politics.

It is in order to end this chapter with suggestions for a Christmas dinner, and I shall copy from my great-grandmother's book a recipe for cooking a turkey, which was held in high esteem by my family. If children or young people are to be present—and I hope they may be, because they are the life and soul of the feast—it is unwise, almost sacrilegious, to depart from the familiar bill of fare. The children

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love best decoration. We used to embellish the table for them. We had a racecourse on one occasion: grand-stand, paddock, obstacles, racehorses and what-not——! Decidedly a triumph, which provoked clappings of small hands. Every Christmas we devised something new and arresting, kept secret till the last moment. My grandfather withheld his donations till dessert was served. We had spent the day with other gifts; there remained the excitement of his generous and dignified presentations. But—if *there are no young people*? Why then surely it is justifiable to consider the middle-aged and elderly, to make an attempt to give them something memorable. My brother and I have done this of late years, aware that plum-pudding and mince-pies are too heavy fare, but, at the same time, prepared to run reasonable risks. Oysters can precede the business of the evening, served with white burgundy preferably a Montrachet of a good year. Clear turtle deserves punch. Here is my grandfather's recipe dated 1826:

One small wineglassful of lemon juice, the peel of half a lemon, two sherry glasses of pounded loaf sugar, one glass of brandy, three glasses of old Jamaica rum, fourteen glasses of honest cold water, one dessert-spoonful of maraschino. Serve iced. Enough for twelve persons.

This may or may not be the recipe of the Mansion House punch. The lemon peel should be thoroughly ground into the sugar. We renounce a fish-course; we disdain an *entrée*. *The pièce de résistance* stands supreme.

Take two pounds of lean beef and two calves feet, a carrot, a small turnip, two heads of celery, two onions, and a bunch of sweet herbs with a few slices

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of ham. Put these ingredients into a stew-pan with pepper, salt, mace and half a dozen cloves. Pour over them half a pint of stock, cover close and let the whole simmer till nearly dry until it is a fine brown colour. Add two quarts of stock made from the bones of the turkey. Let this simmer gently for two hours. Strain through a fine sieve, let it get cold, and then remove the fat. The rest should be a stiff jelly. The turkey must be boned with a very sharp knife, keeping the knife close to the bone so that the bird is not mangled. Season the inside with pepper, salt and mace. Bone a fat young pheasant in the same way, and put it inside the turkey, make a forcemeat of chestnuts, veal and ham, well seasoned with herbs chopped fine, six cloves of shallot, a little lemon-peel, salt, cayenne, all carefully mixed with the yolks of four eggs. The livers of both birds must be added to the forcemeat with a few stoned and chopped raisins. Stuff both birds with this forcemeat. Take a deep pie-dish. Place a layer of the forcemeat at the bottom, some thin slices of a good ham on top of it. Make two layers, and place the turkey upon it with half of the jelly. The rest of the jelly can be poured in, boiling hot, when the turkey has stewed for two or three hours, according to its size.

Your guests, unless they be cowards, are likely to demand a second helping to this toothsome dish. It calls for no adjuncts other than chipped potatoes fried golden in freshest lard. We shall drink with it a noble burgundy, a Musigny of 1906, which I guard jealously for red-letter nights. If ladies are present, cool their palates with a water ice. A dish of cheese, or one of Miss Annie Coleman's prize-winning Stiltons, exacts an aged port. Dessert, coffee, your mellowest brandy

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and a cigar crown a feast which, as my brother observes, ought to be the best dinner of the year. Instead of the cheese you may prefer a *pâté* from Strasbourg or Périgord. Do you know the legend about truffles? A poor peasant and his wife were sitting down to a supper of baked potatoes and milk when an old woman knocked at their door. They invited her to share their meal, explaining that potatoes, from their own patch, were all they had to offer. The old woman thanked them: "You have given me of your best," she said. "To-morrow dig up your potatoes and sell them in Périgord." She went her way. Next day all the potatoes had been transmuted into truffles. The old woman happened to be a passing fairy. In Périgord the children still tell this tale.

You will enjoy your good dinner the more, if you have made provision for the waifs and strays in your parish, and elsewhere.

A Merry Christmas to you!

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Good-night

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Good-night

§ I

I DO not presume to compare my earth-scratchings with the colossal excavations of Edward Gibbon, but sympathy goes out in full spate to that mighty Shade of the Past as I write these valedictory lines. He laid down his pen with infinite regret, knowing that the occupation of a lifetime was gone. I find myself considering the difference between a compilation and the writing of a play or novel. The work of novelist and playwright is his own. What is best in a compilation comes from others. I recall a midnight talk of long ago which took place in that hospitable house, Stoke Court, where Gray composed his *Elegy*. Mr. Winston Churchill, a London County Councillor, and myself were alone together. The L.C.C. said to Mr. Churchill: "Do you take much trouble over the preparation of your speeches?" Mr. Churchill considered this question. "Yes," he replied slowly, "I do. I think them out; I write them out; and then I commit them to memory. What do you do?" The L.C.C., still youthful, gay, and a charming personality, answered quickly: "What do I do? Oh, I—I string together a few apt quotations, sandwich in a story or two, and trust to luck." A future Chancellor of the Exchequer nodded. "Yes, yes, and I daresay, my dear fellow, that these quota-

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tions and stories are not the worst parts of your speech."

It was said banteringly; the L.C.C. laughed.

I make no apology for retelling in these pages what men of letters still remember. I have written this book for the younger generation who have never heard much that we are forgetting. And this is the place to set down my obligations to others. Some, if they were alive, might thank me. I thought of adding a list of authorities, as Mr. Lean has done in his five big volumes of *Collectanea*. But I decided, not without advice from others, to give *en passant* such names as Hone, Brand, Dyer, Lean and Chambers. I could not, and I would, recall the titles of books piled sky-high beside me by the ministering angels of our Public Library. I had to glance at so many still in circulation, still offered for sale by our booksellers. From these I have pilfered as little as possible. It is fun to find gold in abandoned "dumps". Forty years ago a visitor to California bought for a song mountains of ores regarded by the experts as too refractory to yield any profit. The visitor, not an expert, trusting to the genius of the future, made a fortune. Within a few years a new process for reducing such ores was discovered.

The difficulty, as every perspiring anthologist knows, is selection. And every anthologist pleases himself. A flower to one is a weed to another. Again what is a seeker after information to do when authorities differ? Of two versions of a story, not having space for both, he must select the one which pleases him at the risk of being raked over the coals later on by a better-informed man. Happily for me, I have dealt with much that is legendary. Of local customs two gaffers in the same village will give varying details.

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I would not acquit these ingratiating toss-pots of taking liberties with my leg. One gramfer of the New Forest speaking of his brother observed: "I allers say that our Bill was barn a liar, the most notable liar, in these yere parts. Look see, he earns a good livin' at it, he do. Many's the half-crown he's had out o' *you*—an' you knows it."

I have greater faith in the gammers.

The other day, I overheard an enlightening sentence and a name which Charles Dickens would have noted down. Two old women were talking together. In a tone pregnant with conviction, the younger of the two exclaimed as I passed by: "Yas, Mrs. Shutters, you be allers right, *allers*." From the bland expression upon Mrs. Shutters' face, I divined that she accepted this assurance as gospel truth. I believe too that such old dears are more outspoken than men in the same rank of life. A neighbour's children were ill. I called to inquire. To my relief they were up and about. Their mother, who believes in snails as a sovereign remedy against consumption, welcomed me pleasantly. "How are the children?" I asked. In the most cheerful voice she replied, pointing a finger at a small girl who had also greeted me with a reassuring grin: "Betty Lou ain't very grand. She'll never live to see Christmas, will 'ee, dearie?" The child, still grinning, sensible that the spot-light was on her, answered joyously: "Nao-o-ow." The mother, gay as a gazeka (whatever that strange animal may be), indicated a small boy who was coughing distressingly. "An' there's Cuthbert. Cuthbert won't never make old bones. He knows that, don't 'ee, Cuthie?" Cuthbert, tickled pink at not being left out of the conversation, replied with enthusiasm: "Ya-a-as."

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This talk took place three years ago. There may be virtue in snails. Both children are alive and likely to live. The curious will ask: "What variety of snail is eaten in and about Bath? We have two varieties in our garden, one dark-shelled one light. It is the lighter coloured that collectors pick from our walls. I have attempted to swallow snails in San Francisco, in Paris, and in the Côte d'Or. At the *Cloche* at Dijon, the *escargots* are served with a delicious brown sauce. I ate the sauce; but the snails—no. As a French chauffeur said to me: "*L'estomac résiste!*" It is my fault. Many people loathe oysters. An old fellow here, who died not long ago, attributed his longevity to constant eating of snails; he ate them raw!

This compilation has been more fascinating than the writing of a play or novel, which might have been undertaken and completed in half the time. Why? The writing of a play is a damnably self-centring labour. I have spoken of it elsewhere as an obsession. On the other hand, a novel, particularly a novel of characterization, may be a go-as-you-please, leisurely pilgrimage. But you are distressingly conscious in each case that you have to squeeze the vital juices out of yourself. The pleasure I have had in writing this book may be described as the *ardor venatoris*. I have been on a jolly hunt; and now I'm crawling back to stables mounted upon a Pegasus still full of beans, and knowing that I shall, humanly speaking, go afoot for the rest of my days. In fine, I have ridden a hobby-horse, and there is no other ride quite comparable with it. Throughout the hunt the scent has been breast-high.

My brother and I have been talking about Mezzo-

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fanti and Christian Heinecker, who, at the ripe age of twelve months, knew by heart all the principal events related in the Pentateuch. Byron said of the Cardinal that he ought to have been present at the Tower of Babel, as interpreter, because he knew every language *and dialect*! I recall too Datas, but these prodigies can be left out of court together with elderly persons to whom that tricky sprite, Memory, has bidden adieu. We went on to deal with the rank and file. They can be divided into three classes: (1) those who remember what is pleasant, trying to forget what is disagreeable, (2) those who make themselves and their friends wretched by recalling their bludgeonings, and (3) the normal individual who remembers, more or less accurately, everything that has intimately concerned him. My brother contends that life would be intolerable in these days if we spent our leisure in staring at depreciated investments. But he is something of a sun-dial. It may be true that nothing is forgotten, but merely pigeon-holed till, unexpectedly, it emerges from an unexplored zone of subconsciousness. It is true that the veriest fool remembers to draw his salary when it falls due, and yet clever men have forgotten to cash cheques. What made our talk interesting was that my brother suggested that there are an increasing number of young people who are darkening their minds with ugly reflections of life as they see it, eliminating what is lovely on the plea that beauty does *not* endure for ever, *plus* the sterilizing conviction that beauty, as our generation appraised it, has been destroyed by existing conditions which we, not they, have brought about. More, these apostles of inspissated gloom keep their eyes on the passing hour. Had they looked back, they might have

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been cheered, as I have been, to rediscover that history is eternally repeating itself, a *cliché* on every lip. Reading the annals of Bristol, I found descriptions of the Chartist riots. The leaders talked as our "Reds" talk to-day. Not being able to achieve their ends, they destroyed many beautiful houses. One can understand the destruction of the Bastille, but there are misguided fanatics who would smash, if they could, the Venus of Milo. Feuchtwanger, in his recently published *Josephus*, gives a masterly presentation of conditions in Rome, when Nero was Emperor, which provoked then as now the parrot cry, "Civilization has collapsed." Ten years ago civilization had almost collapsed in Italy.

My advice to youthful Jeremiahs is: Look back! I have small hope of such advice being taken. If you look back along the corridors of Time, one significant fact obtrudes itself: in the history of every nation terrorists and anarchists have been most vocal in the years of lean kine. Natural enough, because they believe that any change may be for the better for them. Paradoxically, they leap to the conclusion that public impoverishment is an opportunity for private enrichment. As soon as the sun of prosperity shines again, the croakers and would-be law-breakers are discredited. A happier world laughs at them. That fact is deep rooted in human nature. It is another fact that those who refuse to despair, men like Sir Francis Drake and Nelson, earn immortality. Disturbers of the peace achieve brief notoriety, not a niche in the Temple of Fame. Don't forget the Great Commoner, and his invincible courage and faith in his country. Certain memorable words of his, when he dined at the Mansion House after the battle of Trafalgar, are pat to the

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moment: "Let us hope that England, having saved herself by her energy, may save Europe by her example."

§ II

I HAVE left out of this book much that I wanted to put in: substance melted into shadow when I tried to grasp it. And I have put in what I intended to leave out: the personal pronoun. It may mildly interest younger writers to learn that I burnt the opening chapters. Other work exacted attention. I came back to my rough drafts with a measure of detachment. They seemed to me stilted and stiff—no resiliency. Then a critical friend read them. "This won't do," said he. "It might have been written by a dead pedant. You aren't quite dead yet." So I began again, sensible that leaving out the "ego" in such a *causerie* would be comparable to leaving 'i' out of "brain". Subtract the 'i' and you are left with bran, and if you introduce "i's" they have to be dotted. After dealing previously at such length with the yesterdays, I can say a few words about to-day and to-morrow. Two salient features of to-day are the pictures and football. Last Saturday about 150,000 persons attended league matches under devastating weather conditions, which provoked acerbity in one of our "columnists" (another transpontine word which I detest). But I regard this indifference to bad weather as a cheering indication that we, as a nation, are not yet eviscerated. And, apart from bad weather, bad times and the depression inseparable from them, serve as a "draw" to the millions. The only danger is that we may degenerate

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into a nation of lookers-on, which emphasizes the necessity of providing more playing-fields in our cities. It came to me suddenly that it "pays" to go to the pictures, a point which appears to have escaped the notice of our publicists. Take a single man, for instance. He goes to the pictures regularly. If he stays at home in his bed-sitting-room, he has to have light and heat; if he wanders into a public-house, he has to pay for a drink or two, not because he wants a drink, but because he has to consider the good of the house and return the hospitality of his friends. So, I repeat, *it pays to go to the pictures*. The educational films are admirable and increasing in popularity; the Hollywood films designed to please the Mid-West of America are less popular over here than they were. A fine spectacular film, superbly produced, is and ought to be a gold mine. What is called "sob-stuff" no longer appeals to the younger generation. No man can predict what the future of the film industry will be; as yet it is hardly out of swaddling clothes. Within ten years every cottage may have its miniature picture theatre installed at no more cost than a wireless set. It may be possible—we are assured it will be—for a football "fan" to look on at a great game sitting in his own arm-chair by a comfortable fire. What the towns would lose, the countryside would gain. The future is black indeed, so long as the towns bleed white the country. Whether or not our bishops indict birth-control, there must be an adjustment between two overwhelming evils: deliberate race-suicide on the part of those who ought to have children, and the lamentable multiplication of babies which are better dead. By an absurd paradox, babies to a man unable to support them are a source of increased

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revenue, and a source of increased taxation to a fellow-citizen who could support children if he had them. How the Martians must chuckle over such Gilbertian folly !

The insistent problem to be solved by our statesmen, if we have any, is decentralization. Centralization has failed, not civilization. Men who have devoted their energies to the study of intensive culture are unanimous that our soil can support our people (*if the birth-rate be diminished*). But that means a revolution in our high-school system. The farmer drifts down the centuries as the moss-encrusted reactionary. With many notable exceptions he has not the remotest idea how to get the most out of his land ; he is the palsied victim of the preconceived idea ; he carries on as his father did before him. Now, to-day, he is too impoverished to practise intensive culture, given faith in it. Why should he not be helped and instructed by the State ? I dislike the word subsidy, but the money spent upon educating our children *is* a subsidy. The dole is a subsidy. Grant-in-aid is a happier and less offensive word. In return for the dole, thousands of our unemployed, so I believe, would be eager to set to work to acquire knowledge of intensive culture. These young men came from the country ; they tell me they would like to go back to it. I am sick of the fly-blown arguments against helping those who would repay such help by diminishing the colossal sums expended on the dole with no return to the State, not even gratitude. I deplore the attitude of the man in the street towards what he terms his "rights". Nature acknowledges no such rights. Civilization says : "No man shall starve ; no child shall remain uneducated." But the State-aided are

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not taught that State-aid exacts recognition of obligation to the State. That ought to be preached from every pulpit in the land. I have amused myself by asking intelligent boys of sixteen if it had ever occurred to them to compute their debt to the mother-country. They stare at me agape.

To return to intensive culture. There are horticulturists in Bath who know all that is to be known about the growing of sweet peas and chrysanthemums, but a glance at our allotments is heart-breaking. Men with children to feed perfunctorily grow cabbages. Very few have chickens or a pig. We import eggs, butter, and bacon that ought to be home raised. Everybody knows it; nobody cares. There never will be a fool-proof civilization. A small iconoclastic intelligentsia is making frenzied efforts to force their views upon a huge majority of the unintelligent. Their slogan is machine-made without a machine's efficiency. Away with this preposterous mechanization of life, this sterilization of all that makes life worth living!

I wonder whether the young people who flock to the comedies of Frederick Lonsdale and Noel Coward are aware that these dramatists are poking fun at them? Do the supporters of night-clubs realize how dull night-clubs are? I was lunching the other day at a fashionable restaurant. A young couple sauntered in, attracting attention because both man and girl were strikingly handsome. A lady who was lunching with me knew the girl, whose face is familiar to readers of the *Sketch* and the *Tatler*. The combined ages of her and her cavalier are well under fifty. The girl is an *habituée* of this restaurant. My companion told me that Jill had a different Jack for every day in the

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week not counting Sundays, six providers of luncheon. That, I thought, was a feather in her cap. It takes an experienced "whip" to drive six-in-hand. I watched her and her youthful escort. Throughout the meal they never uttered——! What they were thinking about I can't conjecture, but my sprightly lady hazarded a guess: "They belong to the joy-wheelers, who, whatever they may be doing at the moment, are wishing that they were not doing it; and wherever they are, they are regretting that they are not elsewhere." Certainly this does not add to the joy or wisdom of nations.

So far as the man of business is concerned with the triumph of machinery over men, I recall an arresting phrase: "A master who is too dependent upon his slave runs the risk of turning his slave into his master." The prince of industry is now in bond to the Frankenstein he helped to create.

§ III

I THINK the talk about declining into barbarism unmitigated piffle. If our terrorists slaughter everybody who does not share their political opinions, if they destroy all industries and works of art, they cannot destroy memory. They, if there was nobody else, would remember what was good in what had been, and seek to restore it. What the ages have held to be good would triumph in the end. A few wise men believe that a too gross body politic can only be purged of its ill humours by severe blood-letting: a civil war, fought to a finish, between the forces of disorder and order. Humanity forbids; inhumanity waves its rag. Because we are human

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beings, humanity will triumph if such a ghastly war takes place. But I am writing as one who abhors materialism, the materialism that laid low the great empires of the past. And it exasperates me that our Labour Party, championing the cause of manual workers, are expelling from their ranks the men who work with their brains; but, of course, they deny this. Whenever mind conflicts with muscle, mind goes to the wall temporarily. Lord Snowden is condemned as a traitor to Labour because his mind has soared high above muscle. To accuse such a man of dishonesty, with his record of service to the proletariat, is childish.

I label myself "Conservative"—a silly label. "Preservative" would describe me better. I have no use for the man or woman who makes a business of pleasure. I appreciate leisure, because I work hard. Unearned leisure is a disability, never an amenity. I do not believe that our unemployed, whatever their dole may be, wish to remain unemployed, but it is an appalling fact that unemployment is corroding personal initiative. One youth, who had never done an hour's work in his life, thought that "manual labour" was the name of a Spanish nobleman.

Russia has achieved something to its credit in giving, or trying to give, the artist pride of place. Our great artists are still depreciated even by the so-called patrons of art. What would Beau Nash have said if Lord Chesterfield had insisted that John Wood was a greater asset to England than a Prince of the Blood? He would have expected the very springs of Bath to dry up! I can walk the parades of this town and thank God that the simpering *belles* and supercilious *beaux* are dust. But the work of the Woods remains.

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Our Lord-Lieutenant was given the Freedom of the City, not because he is a marquess, but because he has worked so indefatigably for the county of Somerset. That ought to be the touchstone of to-morrow : *What has a man done ?*

A great inventor is a superman.

In the United States Edison, I take it, ranks with George Washington and Abraham Lincoln. In Italy Senator Marconi stands among the Immortals ; but here in England we go on kowtowing to rank and wealth. There is no more painful experience for a man of letters than to read the fulsome dedications penned by men of genius to patrons not fit to black their boots. The awful reflection is : they had to do it. It was a case of grovel or *starve*.

§ IV

IT would be well if our Board of Education compared the results of what we have done (at much greater cost) with the results accomplished by Switzerland. With a population of barely four millions, Switzerland trains her children to become self-supporting citizens. That is *the* objective. Switzerland has solved the religious problem ; Switzerland is leagues ahead of us in the elasticity of its school system ; Switzerland combines efficiency with economy. The ordinary teacher in our National Schools does not even know what Switzerland has achieved. A mighty pyramid has been built upon an indestructible base : love of country.

Because the outlook is cheerless, every Englishman who loves England ought to shiver a lance against the pessimists. When the Spanish Armada entered

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the Channel, the stoutest hearts in the kingdom might well have quailed. Because the old bull-dog breed refused to quail, we marched into the greatest period in our history. Because devildoms threaten us to-day, we must banish dismal forebodings, and fight the enemies within as we fought the enemies without. Let rich and poor stand shoulder to shoulder as they did during the Great War. The conflicting interests of producer and consumer are screaming for adjustment. Over-production and over-population must be controlled. To deny that this can be done is to damn the executive ability of the nation. With such vital issues in the melting-pot, the man who despairs is a traitor.

§ v

I LEAVE these perplexities and return to yesterday and its lessons. I have expressed myself badly indeed, if any reader indicts me as wishing to revive customs deservedly obsolete, but these serve as stepping-stones to a more intimate knowledge of our forefathers. Unless we attempt to understand them, we cannot understand ourselves. Their ways are no longer our ways, but we, their descendants, are much as they were. We dance at night-clubs instead of round may-poles. We bait bishops instead of bulls. I believe that the fun of a country fair was greater than the fun of Mayfair. England was more merry when the countryside was its backbone. It will be merry again, when our soot-encrusted robots hark back to the land—and not till then. Our soil is our greatest possession. With a wider knowledge of husbandry, we can make one acre yield three times as much as it yielded one

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hundred years ago. If Switzerland can train its children to make a good living on land less fertile than ours, we can do the same.

Work in the fresh air has an extraordinary influence on character: it quickens powers of observation; it makes for patience, tenacity and thrift. Thousands of amateur gardeners work hard and learn to love their work. The stupid *stigma* against work in the fields was never justifiable. The words "yokel" and "country bumpkin" ought to be anathema.

I can hear the indignant exclamation: "My dear man" (I hate to be thus addressed), "do you propose to put boys back on the land if they have no wish to go back?" I reply: "Certainly." If a child doesn't wish to go to school, is it allowed to remain at home? The Republic of Soviets tells the comrades what to do. If they don't obey, they are stood up against a wall and shot. I am not advocating such slaughter, but our Reds, if they are in a position to carry out their programme, intend to be equally autocratic. They propose to apportion to each comrade a task which they, not he, deem suitable for him. The ordinary working-man is still a child in his ignorance of laws of supply and demand affecting him as a cog on a huge fly-wheel. The amusements of the town allure him. Those amusements can be transported to the country.

§ VI

I HAVE mentioned that *Tom Jones* was partly written in this house. Fielding sold the manuscript for £25, but the poet, Thomson, beseeched him to cancel the bargain, which was done. Andrew

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Millar, a famous publisher of that day, offered £200 for the novel at a coffee-house in the Strand. "Give me your hand," exclaimed Fielding, "the book is yours. And, waiter," he continued, "bring a couple of bottles of your best port." Millar made £18,000 out of *Tom Jones*. Later he gave presents to the author to the amount of £2,000, and bequeathed handsome legacies to his sons. A prince of publishers was Mr. Andrew Millar. Sarah Fielding, Henry's sister, lived in the small house adjoining this. It is said that a lady in Bath observed to a friend: "Oh, yes, everybody knows that *Tom Jones* wrote *Tom Brown's Schooldays* in Widcombe Manor."

So far as we can find out, Fielding worked in a room with an oval window above the pediment of our front door. Looking out of this window he could see Ralph Allen's country house, Prior Park. Allen was portrayed as Squire Allworthy. Whether or not Squire Western was drawn from the squire of Widcombe we do not know. We like to believe that the lovely Miss Chapman, whose portrait by Hogarth hangs in the Guildhall, was the original of Sophia Western. Philip Benett, afterwards member for Bath, married Miss Chapman, who had in her silk stocking not only the best-turned leg in Bath, but this manor. The escutcheons on the façade of the house blazon the arms of the Benett family.

§ VII

IT is sad to reflect that the dialect is passing. One would regret this less, if the children spoke good English, but they do not. The common tongue seems to be growing commoner every day. Sweet little maids

Good-night

have no vowels of compassion, as the late Sir Herbert Beerbohm Tree observed. They can't say "no". Instead we get "nao-ow", with a strong nasal inflection. I have not tried to reproduce with phonetical accuracy the *Zoomerzet* dialect. There is a booklet dealing with it on my desk, only interesting to the pedant. Thomas Hardy indicated dialect delightfully never pedantically. Although I live in Somerset I have to read twice certain sentences in this booklet, before I can grasp their meaning.

I end where I began with this difference ; I took up my pen beguiled by our passing spells ; I lay it down sensible that promise has, as usual, outstripped performance. Charm has played Will-o'-the-Wisp with me, dancing ahead of each page, evading my grasp, in sight but out of intimate touch. . . .

And so— Good night !

*Good night ! Sleep, and so may ever
Lights half seen across a murky lea,
Child of hope, and courage, and endeavour,
Gleam a voiceless benison on thee !
Youth be bearer
Soon of hardihood ;
Life be fairer,
Loyaller to good ;
Till the far lamps vanish into light,
Rest in the dreamtime. Good night ! Good night*

THE END.

WIDCOMBE MANOR,
BATH.

November the 12th, 1932.

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